



# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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## TUESDAY, 23 MARCH 2010

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The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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

For the sitting week, 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.

### ASSENT TO BILLS

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have to report that I have received from Her Excellency the Governor letters in respect of assent to certain bills, the contents of which will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the letters for the information of members.

The Honourable R.J. Mickel, MP  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

I hereby acquaint the Legislative Assembly that the following Bill, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, was assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on the date shown:

Date of Assent: 12 March 2010

“A Bill for An Act to amend the Valuation of Land Act 1944, the Land Court Act 2000 and the Water Act 2000 for particular purposes”

This Bill is hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

Governor

12 March 2010

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 12 March 2010, from Her Excellency the Governor to the Speaker advising of assent to a bill [\[1904\]](#).

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The Honourable R.J. Mickel, MP  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

I hereby acquaint the Legislative Assembly that the following Bills, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, were assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on the date shown:

Date of Assent: 17 March 2010

“A Bill for An Act to amend the Civil Liability Act 2003, the Civil Liability Regulation 2003, the Law Reform Act 1995, the Limitation of Actions Act 1974, the Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994, the Motor Accident Insurance Regulation 2004, the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act 2002 and the Personal Injuries Proceedings Regulation 2002 for particular purposes”

“A Bill for An Act to amend the Agricultural College Act 2005 and the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936 for particular purposes”

“A Bill for An Act to amend the Radiation Safety Act 1999”

These Bills are hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

Governor

17 March 2010

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 17 March 2010, from Her Excellency the Governor to the Speaker advising of assent to bills [\[1905\]](#).

## REPORT

### Auditor-General

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have to report that I have received from the acting Auditor-General a report titled *Report to parliament No. 2 for 2010: Follow-up of selected audits tabled in 2007—A performance management systems audit*. I table the report for the information of all honourable members.

*Tabled paper:* Auditor-General of Queensland—'Report to Parliament No. 2 for 2010: Follow-up of selected audits tabled in 2007—A performance management systems audit' [[1906](#)].

## SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

### Sub Judice Rule, Dissent from Acting Speaker's Ruling

**Mr SPEAKER:** Standing order 233(2) provides that members should not refer in the House to matters awaiting or under adjudication in all courts exercising a criminal jurisdiction, including in motions, debate or questions, from the moment the charge is made against the relevant person. The standing order ceases to have effect when the verdict and sentence have been announced or judgement given. The sub judice rule is always subject to the right of the House to consider and legislate on any matter.

As previous rulings have reinforced, the Speaker must be vigilant to uphold the current narrower rule as it seeks to avoid interference in jury trials and the risk of mistrials. If possible, it is highly recommended to members that questions or statements that involve any reference to criminal proceedings be checked by members with the Clerk or the Speaker prior to delivery to ensure there is no infringement of the rule. This will avoid the chair having to make rulings on the run in difficult situations and members having their questions or statements ruled out of order.

I am advised that on the last sitting day, a question asked by the honourable member for Clayfield was ruled out of order by the Acting Speaker on the grounds of sub judice. Notice of dissent to the ruling has been given by the honourable member. The difficulty that has transpired since is that the trial that was on foot that led to the ruling did not reach a final conclusion and the criminal matter is, therefore, still on foot.

Debate on the dissent motion would at this juncture be extremely difficult. Therefore, an alternative course of action has been discussed. I have agreed to the honourable member for Clayfield being at liberty to ask a slightly modified question, thereby alleviating any sub judice concerns. The member has in turn agreed to seek the withdrawal of the notice of dissent.

Whilst the appeal against the Acting Speaker's ruling is effectively being withdrawn, the record will show that the withdrawal occurred in the circumstances outlined in this statement. I trust that the House is agreeable to this sensible course of action. I thank all honourable members concerned for their cooperation in this matter.

## MOTION

### Withdrawal of Dissent from Acting Speaker's Ruling

**Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (9.35 am), by leave: I move—

That the notice of dissent standing in my name be withdrawn and discharged from the *Notice Paper*.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I thank the honourable member for Clayfield.

## PETITIONS

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

### Abortion Laws

**Mr McLindon**, from 5,343 petitioners, requesting the House to legislate to provide adequate support for women and families, including pregnancy counselling services so as to reduce the demand for abortion; a 'cooling off' period after any abortion is decided upon; application of the current law on abortion; a declaration that Article 3 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights covers unborn babies; and appropriate adoption, foster care services and other approaches to the care and support of unwanted babies [[1907](#)].

**Taxi Industry**

**Mr Wellington**, from 29 petitioners, requesting the House to pass legislation which prevents any taxi dispatch company from restricting any legitimate holder of a Queensland Transport issued authority to drive a taxi from accessing any taxi company's dispatch system, without the permission of Queensland Transport [[1908](#)].

**Mossman, Police Resources**

**Mr O'Brien**, from 173 petitioners, requesting the House to improve the police accommodation in Mossman to allow for an increase in police presence [[1909](#)].

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

**Identification Electronic Voting System**

**Mr Horan**, from 309 petitioners, requesting the House to provide the necessary funding and recommendation to the Queensland Electoral Commission to implement an Identification Electronic Voting System at polling booths, commencing at the next State election [[1910](#)].

Petitions received.

**TABLED PAPERS****PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS**

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

12 March 2010—

[1897](#) Response from the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland (Mr Mulherin) to an ePetition (1271-09) sponsored by Mr Knuth from 879 petitioners requesting the House to remove existing prohibitions and allow the keeping of domestic rabbits, with appropriate controls and restrictions, as is the case elsewhere in the Commonwealth

[1898](#) Response from the Minister for Local Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (Ms Boyle) to a paper petition (1370-10) presented by Mr Messenger from 293 petitioners requesting the House to use legislative and regulative powers to overturn Bundaberg Regional Council's decision to build a skate bowl at the Innes Park Reserve

[1899](#) Response from the Minister for Education and Training (Mr Wilson) to a paper petition (1377-10) presented by Mr Messenger from 215 petitioners requesting the House to establish a public state secondary school in Agnes Water

[1900](#) ANZ Trustees Limited and its Controlled Entity—General Purpose Financial Report for the year ended 30 September 2009

16 March 2010—

[1901](#) Gold Coast Hospital Foundation—Annual Report 2008-09

[1902](#) Gold Coast Hospital Foundation—Annual Report 2008-09: Late tabling statement by the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health (Mr Lucas)

18 March 2010—

[1903](#) Law, Justice and Safety Committee: Report No. 74—Inquiry into Alcohol-Related Violence—Final report, March 2010

**STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS**

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Domestic Building Contracts Act 2000—

[1911](#) Domestic Building Contracts Regulation 2010, No. 33

Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991—

[1912](#) Queensland Building Services Authority Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2010, No. 34

Fisheries Act 1994, Marine Parks Act 2004, Sustainable Planning Act 2009—

[1913](#) Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment and Repeal Regulation (No. 1) 2010, No. 35

Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995—

[1914](#) Transport Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2010, No. 36

Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Act 2009—

[1915](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 37

Electrical Safety Act 2002—

[1916](#) Electrical Safety (Installation of Ceiling Insulation) Notice 2010, No. 38

Disaster Management Act 2003—

[1917](#) Disaster Management (Extension of Disaster Situation-Roma) Regulation 2010, No. 39

Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994—

[1918](#) Motor Accident Insurance Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2010, No. 40

Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995—

[1919](#) Traffic Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2010, No. 41

Land Sales Act 1984—

[1920](#) Land Sales Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2010, No. 42

Disaster Management Act 2003—

[1921](#) Disaster Management (Further Extension of Disaster Situation-Roma) Regulation 2010, No. 43

Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994—

[1922](#) Rural and Regional Adjustment Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2010, No. 44

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

[1923](#) Nature Conservation (Protected Plants Harvest Period) Notice 2010, No. 45

REPORT TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following report was tabled by the Clerk—

[1924](#) Report pursuant to Standing Order 158 (Clerical errors or formal changes to any bill) detailing amendments to certain Bills, made by the Clerk, prior to assent by Her Excellency the Governor, viz—

**Civil Liability and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2009**

Amendments made to Bill

**Short title and consequential references to short title—**

*Omit—*

'Civil Liability and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2009'

*Insert—*

'Civil Liability and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2010'.

**Radiation Safety Amendment Bill 2009**

Amendments made to Bill

**Short title and consequential references to short title—**

*Omit—*

'Radiation Safety Amendment Act 2009'

*Insert—*

'Radiation Safety Amendment Act 2010'.

## SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

### Visitors to Public Gallery

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, this morning we have as our guest in the gallery the Hon. Martin Whitely MLA, member for Bassendean from the Western Australian parliament. He will be in the gallery until 10 am. Also visiting this morning will be a group of 20 residents from the Living Choice retirement villas in the electorate of Kawana.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Cyclone Ului

**Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.36 am): Barely three months into 2010 and people all around Queensland have had their fair share of disasters. As South-West Queensland continues the clean-up after this month's devastating floods, in the early hours of Sunday morning Tropical Cyclone Ului unleashed its fury on the people of North Queensland. This category 3 cyclone crossed the coast at Airlie Beach. The Mackay and Whitsunday region felt the full force of the cyclone as it crossed the coast around 1.30 in the morning. The member for Whitsunday has talked about what a terrifying experience it was for her and for many other people in the region.

While the extent of the damage bill from Cyclone Ului is not yet known, we can be very relieved and thankful that no-one was seriously injured or killed and that while we have seen some very serious damage it has not been of the catastrophic nature we have seen with other cyclones. I visited some of the hardest hit areas in Mackay and Proserpine on Sunday, along with the Minister for Emergency Services. While there I saw firsthand not only the damage that this cyclone caused but also the resilience and positive spirit of our northern cousins.

Our thoughts are with those who have lost their homes, their treasured possessions and, in some cases, their livelihoods. Ului's strong winds uprooted trees and downed powerlines, leaving more than 60,000 homes and businesses blacked out. I am pleased to inform the House that, as of this morning, power had been restored to more than 40,000 of these homes and businesses. Ergon hopes to have the remainder reconnected as close to this evening as it possibly can. More than 280 Ergon workers have been working around the clock, in many cases in extremely bad weather, to get that power back on. While they are making every effort and they hope to have the bulk of this behind them by the end of the day, they are encountering very difficult circumstances, including getting into some places that are flooded and places that are difficult to get into due to the number of trees that have been brought down.

I would like to thank those workers for their efforts. I would also like to say a special thankyou to our hardworking SES volunteers and our Emergency Services workers. I want to pay tribute to both the Mackay and Whitsunday regional councils for their tremendous efforts. They were well prepared and they were well organised. That made the difference on the night and during the recovery effort.

Due to the floods and now Cyclone Ului, around 80 per cent of the state is under natural disaster relief and recovery arrangements. It is not that long ago that roughly that percentage was under drought declaration.

**Mr Springborg:** Some still are.

**Ms BLIGH:** I take the interjection. The member is right; of course some are still experiencing drought, but I think it is a measure of how quickly things have turned around for some regions. They are now eligible for natural disaster relief and recovery arrangements which will help those individuals and families who do not have the capacity to meet their immediate unexpected basic costs for food, clothing, medical supplies or accommodation caused by the disaster. Other means tested assistance may be available in some circumstances to help people with essential household contents or structural damage where they have been uninsured.

Yesterday I announced that the Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal for flood affected South-West Queensland had been extended to include people doing it tough in North Queensland. I was very pleased yesterday to note that the federal government announced it would match the Queensland government and contribute half a million dollars to the appeal. That takes the appeal to over \$1.2 million, but more money is needed and I would encourage Queenslanders to dig deep.

I want to assure anyone who has made plans to travel to the Whitsunday region over the Easter break that the clean-up is well underway. Tourism is the lifeblood of this region and tourism operators are confident that the hotels and resorts will be up and running again by the long weekend. So for those who have planned a trip to this very beautiful part of our state, do not cancel your booking. You will still get the amazing holiday that you have planned.

I also note that both I and the Minister for Primary Industries have been in regular personal contact with cane growers in the region. There is a lot of cane flattened, but until every farmer has had an opportunity to get out into every field it is not possible at this stage to determine the extent of damage to that crop. However, we will be working with the industry, which is another important part of the local economy, to ensure that we can provide assistance where possible.

### **Irwin, Mr R**

**Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.41 am): I was shaken by the news this morning that Australia Zoo founder Bob Irwin suffered a very serious heart attack at the weekend. He was airlifted by the Royal Flying Doctor Service to Brisbane's private specialist cardiac hospital, Holy Spirit Northside, from his home at Kingaroy on Sunday.

Bob was a conservationist before most people knew what that word meant and, like his late son Steve, he is a great Queenslander. Bob is also as tough as nails, and I can personally attest to that because I have been lobbied by him on a number of occasions. I hope that his strength will pull him through this challenge. I speak for everyone on all sides of the House when I wish him a very speedy recovery.

**Honourable members:** Hear, hear!

### **Population Growth**

**Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.42 am): Yesterday I released a new report from my department commissioned in the run-up to the Queensland Growth Management Summit on 30 and 31 March. The *Social research on population growth and liveability in South East Queensland* report shows that Queenslanders' views are split down the middle on population growth. When asked to grade on a scale of 100 whether growth was terrible for SEQ, which is at zero, or great for SEQ, which is at 100, respondents recorded an average rating of 47.4. What this clearly shows is that South-East Queenslanders are polarised on the issue and there is a need for a genuine debate. That is why we decided to hold the Queensland Growth Management Summit. As a



community we are at a point where we need to make choices about how we manage the growth that we are experiencing. These results clearly show that South-East Queensland residents have mixed views about population growth, but we need to reach more of a community consensus if we are to find the right way forward.

The report shows that more than nine in 10—some 92 per cent—SEQ residents rate their quality of life positively and that that quality of life rating increases the longer they have lived here. A quarter of all respondents cited increased work opportunities and a wider skills base as the most obvious positive effect of growth, and 23 per cent said that it was better for the local economy. When asked about the negative effects of growth, four per cent of respondents said they had no concerns about population growth but 31 per cent cited greater congestion and inadequate roads as their major concern.

The results of the report highlight some of the major issues in managing growth in Queensland, with respondents sometimes reporting contradictory views. Across-the-board, at least three-quarters of respondents said they wanted to preserve green space, which will mean higher density in some areas. On the other hand, 69 per cent said that they wanted to live in lower density housing, which of course would require more greenfield development in that green space.

The Queensland Growth Management Summit is a chance for us to listen to the community's views. What we need to do is make choices about how we manage that growth better so our children can enjoy the Queensland lifestyle that we obviously enjoy. I alert the House to the fact that the report and the background paper for the summit are available at the Queensland government website, and I table copies of both of those for the benefit of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Queensland Growth Management Summit—Background paper titled 'Opportunities, challenges, choices' [1925].

*Tabled paper:* Queensland Growth Management Summit 2010—'Social research on population growth and liveability in South East Queensland' March 2010 [1926].

### Hancock Prospecting

**Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.44 am): Today marks the beginning of a new era in Queensland's resources sector with the opening of a head office in Brisbane by one of the country's largest mining companies. Hancock Prospecting's chair, Gina Rinehart, will open her Brisbane office in Queen Street today. This means jobs for Queenslanders along with the very real prospect of one of the most significant mining developments in the state's history. Hancock Prospecting's two impending projects in Queensland will, if they receive all statutory and environmental approvals, create the biggest thermal coalmine complex in Australia with annual exports at full production of some 60 million tonnes of good-quality, low-ash, low-gas and low-sulphur coal. Additionally, the company is set to undertake a massive infrastructure project to build a Galilee Basin rail corridor from Alpha and Kevin's Corner to Abbot Point Coal Terminal. This is a 500-kilometre rail project with the potential to create hundreds of jobs and inject billions into the Queensland economy.

The opening of the Brisbane headquarters today means the company has a presence in Brisbane to oversee a bankable feasibility study for the rail line. This study alone stands to inject \$100 million into the Queensland economy and employ up to 400 people as it is carried out over the next 12 months. These 400 jobs for contractors and consultants are in addition to the 30 people who have already been employed in Hancock Prospecting's office. These are the kinds of projects which our government is working hard to attract to Queensland as we claw our way back from the effects of the global financial crisis.

As members know, I met with Mrs Rinehart shortly before Christmas last year and I know that she is extremely keen to get this project moving. That is why her company has moved so quickly over the ensuing three months this year to get staff in place, along with those consultants and contractors who are on the ground. The Deputy Premier along with other relevant ministers also joined Mrs Rinehart in that time before Christmas at a very well-publicised dinner. My government and my ministers will continue to meet with people like Mrs Rinehart who want to invest in our state and create jobs.

We are determined that we investigate projects and significant investment of this kind to make Queensland even stronger. Into the future, should this project stack up, Hancock Prospecting will have two major world-class coalmine operations which will employ thousands of workers for its 30-year-plus mine life. It will provide approximately \$15 billion of expenditure during construction and it will earn over \$5 billion each year in export revenue for Australia. In addition, about \$450 million every year will be returned to the people of Queensland in royalties, and that is one of the largest resource company royalties ever in this state's history.

I know that all members will be aware of the huge presence that Hancock mining has in Western Australia and I know that this company is determined to emulate that presence here in Queensland. If all goes well and all approvals are received in a timely fashion, coal production will commence late in 2013. In the meantime, massive infrastructure will be put in place. This is good news for our economy. It is great news for jobs and great news for Queensland's international reputation as a resources powerhouse. But it is also great for regional Queensland. This is an opportunity for further growth and prosperity in some of our major regional towns and cities, and that is good for the families who live there.

## Health Services

**Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health) (9.48 am): There is absolutely no doubt that demand for health services is growing. In 2003-04 Queensland Health provided around 8.8 million occasions of service. In just five years this figure has skyrocketed to 10.8 million, equating to a 22 per cent increase. Over the same period, the cumulative population growth rate was 13 per cent. It is clear that Queensland Health is growing our services at a rate far outstripping population growth.

As our population grows and ages, demand for health services also grows, and this means employing more people to deliver these services. Since 2005 we have employed an extra 12,500 doctors, nurses and allied health professionals. What is more, we are planning for future growth. Our \$6 billion health infrastructure program is expanding our hospital capacity by building and rebuilding hospitals from the Torres to the Tweed. Put simply, we are employing more people and building more health infrastructure under the Bligh government than any other government before us.

The Bligh government has made tough choices to weather the fallout from the global financial crisis. Our \$6 billion hospital building program—the largest ever undertaken in Australia—will deliver 40,000 local Queensland jobs over the life of the projects alone. That is, for example, nearly 2,600 construction jobs in Cairns, more than 2,000 in Townsville, nearly 2,400 in Mackay, more than 670 in Rockhampton, more than 9,800 at the Gold Coast University Hospital and more than 7,000 at the Queensland Children's Hospital. Last year, the AMA called for 3,750 extra beds across Australia. The Queensland government's massive hospital building program will deliver more than 1,700 additional beds in Queensland alone.

But improving care is also about better services, new technology and new models of care that improve the standards of care delivered to patients. That is why we are not only opening more beds but also expanding in a sustainable way regional services, such as providing a new cardiac catheter lab and cancer centre in Cairns, expanded neonatal intensive care in Townsville, expanded dialysis in Mackay, medical resonance imaging in Rockhampton and cancer services at the Gold Coast.

As demand grows for services so, too, will it grow for people who provide these services, particularly in our growing regions. Twelve months ago the Bligh government gave a commitment to the electorate that it would protect Queensland jobs and continue to tackle growth and demand in the face of an unprecedented global financial crisis. We also committed to employing an extra 3,500 clinical staff over three years to meet growing demand. I am pleased to inform the House today that we are not only delivering on this commitment, we are well on the way to exceeding it. Since the end of March 2009, we have employed an extra 2,099 doctors, nurses and allied health staff. That is nearly two-thirds of our commitment in a third of the time. That means an extra 2,099 clinical staff on the ground treating more Queensland patients closer to home. For example, Cairns has increased staffing levels from 2,150 in February 2009 to 2,252 staff in February this year. That includes an 11.8 per cent increase in medical staff—from 250 to 270 in just one year and an increase in nursing staff from 1,119 in February 2009 to 1,145 currently.

In Mackay, we have seen a 6.45 per cent increase—from 1,038 staff in March 2009 to 1,105 staff in February this year. In just medical staff alone, that is an increase from 121 in March 2009 to 132 in February this year and an increase in nursing staff from 496 in March 2009 to 536 currently. In Bundaberg, we have employed an extra 93 staff in just 12 months, including a 23.19 per cent increase in medical staff from 84 in March 2009 to 101 in February this year and an increase in nursing staff from 443 in February 2009 to 498 currently.

There is no doubt that Queensland hospitals have played their part in securing jobs for Queenslanders and building a workforce to meet and plan for future growth. We are committed to ensuring that our state is well placed to meet growing demand. In light of the federal government's reform agenda, we are committed to ensuring that all Queenslanders can continue to access free health care when and where they need it.

## QRNational

**Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development) (9.52 am): I also join with the Premier in sending my best wishes to my home town of Proserpine, which faced the cyclone on the weekend. The people of Proserpine have largely taken the cyclone in their stride and I know that it did not disrupt many of the things that were planned over the weekend. A certain engagement party was able to proceed on Saturday night. I send my best wishes to my cousin, Kristy, and her fiancée, Mick, who celebrated on Saturday night. I am sure the opposition joins me in wishing the couple a long and happy future together. Those opposite are not that mean-spirited.

With Queensland's coal exports expected to double by 2030, now is the time to position our export infrastructure to grow. Competition and demand are growing and that is why we need Queensland Rail fit for the fight and able to grow. That is why we have settled on a new structure for QRNational to give it both the incentive and the balance sheet to expand the network. This point has been endorsed today by former ACCC chairman Professor Allan Fels in this morning's quality press. The government welcomes the debate. It is a debate about future prosperity and it is one that we welcome.

As the hunger for our resources grow, so will the new QRNational and that means more jobs, not fewer. Today I can announce that QR is calling for workers in the Mackay, Bowen and Townsville regions to help fill the 800 jobs that are needed to deliver the Northern Missing Link Project. That is 800 new jobs for a project that is critical to the state's coal supply chain on top of the 600 job vacancies across QR that the Premier announced last week.

To the nay-sayers who cast doubt over QRNational's future, here are 1,400 reasons this company is only going to get bigger and better. The 69-kilometre Northern Missing Link Project will connect the Goonyella coal rail system to the Newlands rail system. It will increase rail capacity, enabling QR's customers with mines along the Newlands and Goonyella rail systems to export up to 50 million tonnes of coal per annum via the Abbot Point Coal Terminal. This project is great for the coal industry, great for QR and also great for the local communities. It will deliver employment and business opportunities in regional Queensland and also inject money into local economies.

To deliver this project by early 2012, QR needs workers with a wide variety of skills—ranging from labourers, concreters, surveyors and plant operators to engineering and administrative staff. It is estimated that, in addition to those roles directly involved in delivering the project, approximately 2,750 local jobs will be supported in industries such as hospitality, manufacturing and equipment and material supplies. I expect that there will be great interest in participating in this project. Locals in Bowen and Mackay can attend information sessions tomorrow evening and Thursday evening and should check the QR website for more information.

The government is presently putting together a new board to take QRNational to the international marketplace as well as putting together a new Queensland Rail board that is focused on the passenger network in particular. I take this opportunity to recognise the contribution of one of the directors of QR Ltd who has advised of his intention to leave the board to pursue new opportunities. Peter Holmes a Court became a director of QR Ltd back in 2006 and was reappointed to the position in September last year. In his time on the board of QR Ltd, Peter has brought a unique depth of both national and international experience to the position. Together with chairman John Prescott and the other board members, Peter has contributed to the positioning of QR as Australia's leading transport and logistics company. As he has sought to help transform the fortunes of the Rabbitohs in Sydney, Peter has been equally a key player in the agenda for the transformation of QR.

Mr Holmes a Court has been part of the team that has been focused on delivering the new QR into this decade—a QR that is committed to safety, customer service, commercial capability and growth. The fact is that the outlook for QR is strong and Mr Holmes a Court can leave the board knowing that we are heading towards exciting times and in very good shape. As a result, we are expecting a very positive outcome for both the new Queensland Rail in July and, soon after that, for QRNational. I know that Mr Holmes a Court is a strong supporter of the sale and the vertically integrated model for QRNational. Mr Holmes a Court has had to relinquish this position and positions on a number of other boards as he prepares to take on a new venture in New South Wales. On behalf of the government, I thank Peter for his contributions in helping drive this great company forward.

### **Cyclone Ului, Ergon Energy**

**Hon. S ROBERTSON** (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade) (9.56 am): Ergon Energy crews are working around the clock repairing powerlines and restoring power to households and businesses in North Queensland. Around 280 Ergon Energy workers are hard at work out in the field battling bad weather to bring power supplies back on. They will be joined today by around 30 Energex workers who are ready to swing into action. A number of Energex generators are also being sent to cyclone damaged regions.

Around 60,000 homes and businesses lost power when the cyclone crossed the coast. I am advised that, as of this morning, around 20,000 customers are still without power. Ergon expects to have power restored to the majority of households and businesses later today. Ergon crews have put in a mighty effort. They have battled bad weather and heavy rain to get the job done. Some crews have even been stranded by floodwaters. But they are out and about right now doing what they do best. It is not a nine to five job; it can be hazardous and for that we owe them our thanks.

It is worth noting that the damage to the network was not confined to overhead powerlines. A number of households and businesses in the Airlie Beach business precinct with underground powerlines also lost supply. Overhead lines feed the power underground and if there is a violent storm or cyclone and trees fall on those overhead feeder lines, everyone is in the same boat whether their supply is underground or above ground.

**Mr Seeney:** Same tired, old defensive argument every time.

**Mr Fraser:** It's the same press release you've put out.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Both sides of the House.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I note that the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Callide have once again called for all powerlines to be underground.

**Mr Seeney:** Ten years.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** The latest departmental estimates—and I take the interjection because I am about to say six years but he is right; it has been 10 years since he has been banging on about this—put the cost of undergrounding powerlines across one of the largest electricity networks in the world at more than \$56 billion. Just in case the member for Callide did not hear it I will say it again: \$56 billion.

In his press release this morning the Leader of the Opposition said he has been on about this for six years. The member for Callide has been on about it for 10 years. The opposition has had 10 years to tell us how it will fund that \$56 billion bill to underground power lines throughout Queensland. Over that 10-year period we have had four elections and on each of those occasions the opposition has squibbed on that most fundamental question of all: where will the money come from? Will they slash the Education budget, the Health budget or the roads budget, or will they increase electricity bills? What would be the cost of \$56 billion to every man, woman and child in Queensland? It would be about \$14,000. That is the impact on average Queenslanders that the crazy plan of those opposite to underground power lines right throughout Queensland would have. The craziness of their idea would slug mums and dads throughout this state with \$14,000 on their electricity bills. If I am wrong, I ask those opposite to tell me. I ask them to come up with the costings. What the member for Callide has never said is how they will pay for it. I invite him to do so today. When he gets up in front of the media later today and bangs on about this, I invite him to tell Queenslanders for the first time how he will pay for it. This is just one big, fat, large tax imposed by an opposition that has no fresh ideas and nothing to offer the people of Queensland.

### **Cyclone Ului, School Closures**

**Hon. GJ WILSON** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training) (10.01 am): I know that the thoughts of all Queenslanders are with those facing a huge clean-up after the destruction caused by Cyclone Ului this weekend. The residents of the Mackay-Whitsunday region are getting on with the job and it is clear that they are showing the true Queensland spirit. There were 19 state schools and three Catholic schools that were closed on Monday. Today that figure is down to 10. Most have reported damage to facilities, fallen trees, debris and the loss of power and essential services such as sewerage and water supply. These schools are not currently safe for students and staff to occupy and will remain closed until they can be made safe. School principals in the cyclone affected areas are working closely with their communities and local disaster management groups. The state school and Catholic school sectors are working very closely together in the region.

I take this opportunity to thank all of those dedicated workers who are currently on the ground doing everything possible to get these schools back into a usable condition. A special thanks must go to the principals, teachers and staff for their hard work and perseverance in getting schools back to normal as quickly as possible. It is a remarkable feat. Many staff members are also facing a massive clean-up at their own homes. That they are at the schools lending a helping hand is a measure of their extraordinary commitment, and for that I thank them.

I know that local communities will be deeply affected by the disaster. That is why support services for students and staff have been made available through school guidance officers and employee assistance advisers. We are hoping to have schools re-open as quickly as possible over the coming week, but it may take some time. We urge parents to continue to monitor radio reports about the status of schools. Concerned parents can also contact their local principal or education district office for updated information about access to their children's school and classroom arrangements. I know that, with the fantastic community spirit we are seeing from locals, the region will come through this ordeal with an even stronger community.

### **Cyclone Ului, Primary Industries**

**Hon. TS MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland) (10.03 am): The damaging effects and crop losses resulting from Cyclone Ului will not be fully realised for months. As the local member for Mackay, I witnessed firsthand the extent of the damage. I have also contacted industry leaders and stakeholders in the impacted area. Cyclone Ului caused damage to sugarcane crops in the Mackay and Proserpine region. Although it is too early to predict the level of damage to the sugarcane crop, it is hoped that much of the damaged cane that has been blown over in the Mackay-Whitsunday region will recover if the rain stops. However, there will be some impact on productivity with lower tonnages and lower c.c.s. levels.

In the Proserpine region it is estimated that 10 to 20 per cent of the total sugarcane crop may be lost. With lodged cane and the possibility of trees or debris in the crop, harvesting will also be affected because this will slow down the rate of harvest. The industry has considerable resilience and, although the losses will be sharply felt while the international sugar prices are high, most growers are thankful that the destruction was not more severe.

Local seafood retailers have warned that there may be fresh seafood shortages at Easter. However, the impacts to the fishing industry will not be known until fishing resumes. Fruit and vegetable growers in the Bowen region say that, although it is early days, it appears that the damage to the fruit and vegetable crop could have been much worse. Many growers have not yet planted seedlings, including growers of tomatoes, rockmelons, pumpkins and cucumbers. At the moment there are no problems getting produce to market. However, this may change if the rain continues.

DEEDI officers in Bowen and Mackay are currently assessing crop losses, crop damage and farm infrastructure damage across the impacted area. The Bligh government will work with primary producers and small businesses affected across the region and provide assistance to help them get back on their feet. We hope to have an accurate estimate of crop losses later this week.

### **Cyclone Ului, Recovery Assistance**

**Hon. RE SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Information and Communication Technology) (10.06 am): Following the devastation wrought by Cyclone Ului in North Queensland, staff from the building arm of the Department of Public Works, QBuild, have been quick to assist local authorities. Under the Queensland Disaster Management Plan, the Department of Public Works provides the key functional support roles of building and engineering services, emergency supply and communications.

Before the cyclone struck, QBuild had already been active with the establishment of its regional disaster coordination centre and the securing of loose items on all of its construction sites. A total of 24 personnel, including six administrative staff, reported within six hours of the cyclone passing. QBuild assessment teams were deployed across the region with an emphasis on ascertaining damage to state building infrastructure such as schools. As of yesterday, 19 schools throughout the impacted region were closed. The closures were primarily due to safety concerns arising from vegetation damage throughout the school grounds or, in the case of smaller remote schools, a lack of power to operate sewage treatment equipment. The Minister for Education brought us up to date in his ministerial statement in relation to that.

As of yesterday, 30 QBuild personnel were engaged in recovery operations. In addition, there are 18 contract personnel working on behalf of QBuild. Due to the large amount of tree damage, QBuild has engaged six specialist arborist teams from Townsville and Rockhampton to expedite clean-up operations at all affected state school sites. QBuild will also be deploying an additional 10 chainsaw qualified personnel from across its South-East Queensland based regional offices with equipment from Brisbane.

QBuild is managing the impact on government agencies and their respective tenants by prioritising the completion of damage assessments and a staged commencement of repairs, including to public housing. A number of other Public Works service areas are on standby to assist the recovery from the cyclone event including QFleet for the supply of vehicles, SDS for the supply of materials and Project Services for assistance with any structural engineering reports.

Those who live in North Queensland whose homes, schools, hospitals and services have suffered at the hands of Cyclone Ului can rest assured that they are in very safe hands with the Department of Public Works and QBuild. Again the capacity of this government to retain a highly qualified workforce has been demonstrated.

### **Cyclone Ului, Tourism Industry**

**Hon. PJ LAWLOR** (Southport—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading) (10.08 am): As every Queenslander knows, and as the Premier and every minister has mentioned, the Whitsundays was hit over the weekend by Tropical Cyclone Ului. The state government is currently working with Tourism Queensland and the local tourism industry to assess the damage. Tourism Queensland is also developing a response plan to help mitigate the effects on the tourism industry. I have spoken with Peter O'Reilly, the CEO of Tourism Whitsundays, and also my parliamentary colleague the member for Whitsunday, Jan Jarratt. The initial feedback from our on-the-ground representatives is that tourists and residents currently in the region are safe and well. Although the impact has resulted in power failures, flooding and some structural damage, reports indicate the region has escaped comparatively well.

Understandably, tourism operators have been battered and currently are in the initial stages of clean-up and repair. This will be tough for the industry, particularly on top of a difficult 12 months. However, it is expected that the recovery efforts will be relatively quick and the region will return to business as usual in the short term.

Therefore, at the moment our focus is on making sure that the disruption to tourism businesses is not significant and that we ensure potential holidaymakers have the right perception about the effects of Cyclone Ului. We want to ensure continued consumer confidence in Queensland as a holiday destination and encourage tourists to continue with their holiday plans and return when they are able. I would like to assure anyone planning a trip to the region during the coming days and weeks, especially over the Easter period which is just around the corner, that we are doing everything possible to return the landscape, the beautiful beaches, tourism activities and experiences to normal as quickly as possible.

I also want to assure the Queensland tourism industry that Tourism Queensland is moving quickly to develop a recovery plan and has begun working with industry to pull together coordinated marketing and publicity activity, using existing relationships with media, industry and airline partners to relay key messages in the lead-up to the crucial Easter holiday period. Once the region has been cleared and power has been restored—as indicated by the Premier, probably that will be today—the aim of this activity will be to tell Australia and the world that Queensland is well and truly open for business.

### **Cyclone Ului, Maritime Safety**

**Hon. RG NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Transport) (10.11 am): I, too, would like to update the parliament on the post cyclone recovery effort at Airlie Beach. Airlie Beach and the Whitsunday islands were battered when Tropical Cyclone Ului crossed the Queensland coast early on Sunday. As well as the damage to houses, which has been spoken about, the destructive winds and large swells have caused havoc and serious damage to many vessels in the area. Approximately 60 vessels have broken their moorings and been set ashore onto the rocks or grounded on the foreshore. The worst affected area is Shute Harbour where some 30 vessels were driven ashore by the cyclone. The recovery process is underway but will take some time to complete.

Maritime Safety Queensland has been working with vessel owners and operators to assist with the identification and location of stranded vessels. Shortly a specialist team of surveyors will be on their way from Brisbane to assist with finding sunken vessels or obstructions that may pose a hazard to navigation and to ensure that navigation channels are clear of obstructions. The surveyors use sophisticated side-scan sonar to identify objects on the sea floor.

Thankfully, there are few reports of vessel source marine pollution and I am advised that the amount of fuel spilled is very small. I am also advised that the wind and sea conditions will act to quickly dissipate any minor diesel spills. I expect that insurance companies will work with the insured vessel owners to salvage and repair damaged vessels as quickly as possible. All mariners are reminded to be particularly cautious over the coming weeks because, following the cyclone, there may be sunken debris adrift in the rivers and offshore. A notice to mariners warning of the dangers has been issued by Maritime Safety Queensland.

I acknowledge and thank the vast numbers of emergency management personnel who have assisted in the response and recovery. Whilst a number of ports were closed before the cyclone hit, I am pleased to say that all ports are now open for business. At one of those ports, Hay Point, staff were stuck in their building after fallen trees blocked the access road to the vessel traffic service centre. The centre lost power, but generators kicked in and staff continued monitoring safety at the port. Once the cyclone passed, the ever-resilient staff removed the trees in order to open the road once more. Queensland's mariners and public servants are a hardy breed, and I am sure all those working together in North Queensland will recover.

## Road Infrastructure

**Hon. CA WALLACE** (Thuringowa—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads) (10.14 am): Last week the Treasurer announced the Bligh government's commitment to half a billion dollars worth of new road infrastructure. Firstly, the Gateway upgrade south works will complete the last link in providing motorists with at least six lanes of motorway from the airport to the Gold Coast. Construction works will include upgrading this four-kilometre section of the Gateway Motorway between Mt Gravatt-Capalaba Road and Miles Platting Road to six lanes—

**Mr Reeves:** Hear, hear!

**Mr WALLACE:** I take the honourable member's interjection—widening of the bridges at Prebble Street and Mt Gravatt-Capalaba Road interchange to three lanes in each direction, and minor improvements at the Mt Gravatt-Capalaba Road interchange. Works will be completed by the middle of next year, at a cost of up to \$240 million.

Queensland Motorways will engage Leighton Abigroup Joint Venture to undertake this construction as an extension of its current involvement with the adjoining Gateway Upgrade Project, helping save money in establishment costs and delivering improved infrastructure earlier for Queensland motorists. Careful planning and design will ensure that the upgrade will reduce the impact on landholders, with no compulsory resumptions required. However, Queensland Motorways may seek to negotiate with some landholders separately.

Intelligent transport system elements will also be employed to help manage traffic along this section of the motorway. These elements will link to the Queensland Motorways Traffic Management Centre and will allow an interface with the Brisbane Metropolitan Transport Management Centre. Bringing forward the Gateway upgrade south works will deliver significant benefits to motorists sooner, including efficient freight movements to support the growth and development of the Australia TradeCoast, reduced congestion and associated costs, and improved safety and travel time reliability.

In parallel with this project, we will also commence a tender process for the construction of a new Port of Brisbane motorway, which will see the existing road almost double in length. The two-lane motorway standard road will run from Lindum Road to Pritchard Street and will connect to the existing Port of Brisbane Motorway. These great infrastructure announcements are planning ahead to support growth in South-East Queensland and build on our \$18 billion Roads Implementation Program commitment over the next five years.

## Cyclone Ului, Disaster Management

**Hon. NS ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (10.16 am): Severe Tropical Cyclone Ului's impact on the Whitsunday Coast community in the early hours of Sunday morning provided yet another example of the effectiveness of the state's disaster management system. From the outset, I want to thank all the people who played a role in preparing for the cyclone's arrival and responding to calls for assistance in its aftermath. I particularly acknowledge the effective role played by local and district disaster management groups, led by local government and police, and the way in which they prepared and informed their communities.

Aided by advice from the Bureau of Meteorology, Emergency Management Queensland maintained a watching brief on Ului since its development on 11 March near Vanuatu. As the system edged closer to the coast, EMQ worked with local councils and local and district disaster management groups to assist them with their preparations. Our natural disaster arrangements are built on the strong foundation of local and district disaster management groups—locals are best placed to know the unique needs of their own communities—with support provided by the state government through Emergency Management Queensland, police and other agencies.

On Sunday the Premier and I visited Proserpine and Mackay to inspect the damage caused by Ului. Mayors Mike Brunker and Col Meng reported that the damage suffered by the communities was lessened significantly by a combination of preparedness by local disaster agencies and the community following the advice to prepare for the cyclone's arrival.

There is still much to be done in the clean-up from this cyclone. Local State Emergency Service volunteers from around the Mackay-Whitsunday region are working with council day labour to remove fallen trees and debris. They are being supported by a further 80 SES volunteers who have travelled to the area from surrounding regions. One of the major impacts of the cyclone was a loss of power across the region, with significant damage to transmission and distribution infrastructure. This morning many thousands of residents are still without power. Our thanks go out to hundreds of Ergon Energy workers who are working extended hours to restore power to the communities.

Joint state-federal government relief and recovery arrangements have been activated, providing immediate financial support for individuals, families and councils to assist with the repair of damaged infrastructure. Local disaster management arrangements are now in full recovery mode, which no doubt will continue for many weeks and, in some cases, months.

## Indigenous Communities, Reporting

**Hon. D BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.18 am): Today I table the eighth quarterly report on key indicators in Queensland's discrete Indigenous communities and the sixth quarterly report on the operations of the Family Responsibilities Commission. School attendance is steady overall, much as in the previous report period. While there has been considerable improvement in attendance rates on years past, there is still a long way to go before all the kids in those communities are routinely and regularly attending school.

*Tabled paper:* Quarterly report on key indicators in Queensland's discrete Indigenous communities: October-December 2009 [1927].

*Tabled paper:* Family Responsibilities Commission report to the Family Responsibilities Board and the Minister for Local Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships—Quarterly Report No. 6: October-December 2009 [1928].

The reports do record the good news that a number of communities show a decrease in the level of hospital admissions for assault related conditions. Some of the big decreases have occurred in communities such as Aurukun, which had a real reduction from six to four hospital admissions for assault over the three-month period, and Cherbourg, which had a reduction of 16 down to 13. Particular congratulations must go to the communities of Kowanyama, six down to one; Lockhart River, five down to one; Mossman Gorge, five down to two; Napranum, eight down to three; and Wujal Wujal, two down to zero. Improvements have also been made in the northern peninsula area, five down to three, and Woorabinda, nine down to six.

These are encouraging figures. However, the story is not quite so good when we look at the figures on reported offences against the person. There were eight communities with increases. This is a serious concern and so I have accordingly triggered an investigation into the reasons in these particular communities. However, some other communities did show decreases in the rates. These include Aurukun, Doomadgee, Hope Vale, Mornington Island, Napranum and Yarrabah.

So far as the Cape York welfare reform trial report is concerned, I commend all involved, particularly the family responsibilities commissioners—David Glasgow and others—and the staff. I note their report, however, on the need for better coordination of services particularly in connection with the wellbeing centres. In this regard, the Royal Flying Doctor Service now has a memorandum of understanding to streamline how it refers clients between organisations so it can better meet clients' needs. Overall, the quarterly reports show that progress is being made and residents are saying that restoring local Indigenous authority is an important step forward towards stronger, healthier communities.

## Natural Disasters, Recovery Assistance

**Hon. KL STRUTHERS** (Algera—ALP) (Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women) (10.21 am): When Mother Nature wreaks havoc, the great Queensland spirit shines through. Following the devastating floods in south-west Queensland and the destructive Cyclone Ului at the weekend, people around the state have been helping each other. The Department of Communities has also swung into action to deliver assistance where and when people battling to rebuild their lives need it most.

In south-west Queensland, we have already helped flood affected communities with more than \$890,000 through 2,300 assistance grants. Following devastation caused by Cyclone Ului in places like Airlie Beach, Proserpine, Mackay and the Whitsunday islands, officers have been out and about offering outreach services and establishing community recovery centres. Centres are already open at Cannonvale TAFE and the Proserpine Community Centre, where affected residents can access information and emergency funds. A third recovery centre will be set up today at Churches of Christ in Mackay on Beaconsfield Road.

People unable to visit community recovery centres can phone the Department of Communities' disaster recovery hotline on 1800173349. Through the hotline, the centres and our outreach services, eligible residents are able to access grants of \$170 for individuals and up to \$780 for households of five people. The advice from North Queensland this morning is that we have already given grants to 30 people and received 140 calls. These grants can be used for essential items such as food, clothing, medication and emergency accommodation. Lifeline, Red Cross and Centrelink services are also on hand to answer questions and provide support during this tough time. Staff have been away from their families, working from dusk to dawn to help communities through the recovery effort. I thank them for their efforts.



### Carrara Stadium Upgrade

**Hon. PG REEVES** (Mansfield—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport) (10.23 am): Queensland has one of the fastest growing populations in the country. The Bligh government is planning for the future and tackling the challenge of this growth head on. At the same time, we recognise that an increasing population opens up a world of opportunities. On the Gold Coast this growth has seen the birth of the Titans and the Gold Coast United soccer team. And soon the Gold Coast Football Club, the AFL's 17th team, will play at the redeveloped Gold Coast stadium from mid-2011.

Last week, I was pleased to join the Premier, the member for Southport, the member for Burleigh, representatives from the AFL and the Gold Coast City Council at the stadium to announce a further \$11.9 million in funding towards its redevelopment. The AFL is contributing an additional \$3.3 million and the Gold Coast City Council is investing an additional \$3 million in this project. This brings the total extra funding to more than \$18 million. The Bligh government has already committed \$60 million towards the \$126 million redevelopment of the stadium. With the new funds, the redevelopment is now worth more than \$140 million.

As we have rolled out our planning for the stadium, a number of opportunities became clear. One of those was an opportunity to make this a cleaner, greener stadium. Because of the new funding, solar panelling up to five metres in width will be installed around the inner edge of the stadium's roof. This will ensure that we have made the best use of the sun's energy to generate power and help reduce our overall carbon footprint. In a Queensland first, the installation of the panelling will generate around 275,000 kilowatt hours of electricity per annum, or more than 20 per cent of the stadium's total electricity needs. This is equivalent to powering more than 250 homes in Queensland.

The redevelopment is estimated to generate more than 950 jobs during construction, and the operation of the football club will generate more jobs for Queenslanders. As our population increases, the Bligh government is committed to delivering world-class sports infrastructure that keeps Queenslanders in jobs, stimulates the economy and is great for tourism. An economic impact study conducted by the AFL estimates that the stadium will contribute \$340 million to the economy over the next 10 years. This economic benefit will be as a result of business generated by game-day patrons and interstate travellers who will visit the Gold Coast for events at this stadium.

### Disability Services

**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (10.25 am): With Queensland growing by over 100,000 people every year, the disability services sector is presented with many unique challenges. An Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report has predicted that 2.3 million Australians would have a profound or severe disability by 2030. One year ago, I identified three priorities. They were to provide more options to older carers caring for a loved one with a disability, to assist younger people with a disability who are living in aged-care facilities to move out and to provide support for children with a disability at the earliest point after diagnosis.

Firstly, we are leading the country in delivering support for older carers. As I stated in parliament in the last sitting, over 40 per cent of our new social housing will assist families who have a member with a disability. Queensland has delivered 19 out of the 40 new beds so far created across Australia as part of our \$18.3 million share of the Commonwealth's disability assistance package. With this support, much of the pressure associated with planning for their child's future will be alleviated.

Secondly, it is clear that aged care is not the best accommodation option for younger people with a disability. That is why, through the joint state-Commonwealth initiative, we have assisted around 100 younger people to date with more appropriate accommodation options. Lives are being changed.

Thirdly, and most importantly for the future of service delivery, the Bligh government has initiated innovative programs to help our children with a disability. Child Connect officers are currently being appointed in Townsville and Ipswich. They will proactively seek out families who have a child with a disability and link them with the services that they need early on.

In addition, we are providing \$1 million on the Sunshine Coast for a new self-directed pilot program to provide up to 80 families with more flexibility. One year on, I have listened to hundreds of families throughout Queensland. They want us to be more proactive, they want us to provide more flexibility and they want us to provide more specialist services, and we are delivering.

### Electric Cars

**Hon. KJ JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability) (10.27 am): Today, I will be jumping into the driver's seat of the first mass produced electric car approved for Australian roads. I recently joined the CEO of Mitsubishi Australia to witness the arrival of two of their cars from Japan to Brisbane. Mitsubishi chose Brisbane as the first port of call on their demonstration tour because Queensland has shown great leadership in facilitating the introduction of electric cars to Australia. I invite MPs to join me outside Parliament House to inspect this cutting-edge technology which is taking off around the world.

We can expect to see this type of cleaner technology hitting Queensland roads in the next few years. Cars are responsible for almost half of all emissions from the transport sector, and Queensland's growing population and car use makes this both an increasing challenge and an opportunity for action. Electric vehicles produce fewer emissions than the average passenger car but, when hooked up to renewable energy, they offer zero-emission transport.

Last year, on behalf of the Queensland government, I signed up to the international EV20 initiative to fast-track electric vehicle deployment. To deliver on that commitment, build on our track record and properly prepare for the arrival of electric vehicles in Queensland in coming years, we must begin planning now.

The Minister for Energy and I are currently engaging with electric vehicle stakeholders and electricity network providers to develop a state policy this year. We are looking at six key policy areas: environmental performance, infrastructure, regulation, behaviour change, industry development and renewable energy.

I am excited about this technology because it brings enormous opportunities to reduce our carbon footprint here in Queensland through the transport sector. I am pleased that Queensland can be at the forefront of their development in Australia and our government is committed to investigating every opportunity we can.

## SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

### Report

**Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (10.29 am): I table the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Legislation Alert No. 4 of 2010*. In addition, I table copies of two submissions received by the committee regarding the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010.

*Tabled paper:* Scrutiny of Legislation Committee Legislation Alert No. 4 of 2010 [[1929](#)].

*Tabled paper:* Submission, dated 17 March 2010, from Mr Andrew Preston, barrister, regarding the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 [[1930](#)].

*Tabled paper:* Submission, dated 17 March 2010, from Surat Gladstone Pipeline and Arrow Energy Ltd regarding the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 [[1931](#)].

## SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

### School Group Tours

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, during today's sitting of parliament we will be visited by Genesis Christian College in Bray Park in the electorate of Pine Rivers and Stanthorpe State School in the electorate of Southern Downs.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Sale of Public Assets

**Mr LANGBROEK** (10.30 am): My first question without notice is to the Premier. The Premier refused to take privatisation to the ballot box, refused to take privatisation to a referendum, refused to take privatisation to a 2010 conference with the Labor Party and refused to allow a special people's question time on privatisation. Will the Premier agree to a public debate with me to be held in a public forum on Labor's privatisation policies, or will the Premier run and hide?

**Ms BLIGH:** The Leader of the Opposition continues to astonish us all. Not only do we not know yet what the LNP stands for when it comes to an economic strategy, not only does it have 15 positions before lunch on the issue of privatisation; now it has turned to the federal parliament to seek its ideas for today's parliament.

Today the Prime Minister will debate the leader of the federal opposition on the all-important question of health. Why is there a debate outside the federal parliament today? Because this is a federal election year and the issue of health will be one of the key issues in the federal election. I am very happy to debate the Leader of the Opposition, whomever it may be, on any issue when we get to a state election year. Do members know why? Because this is the house of debate. We have debated the issue of privatisation in this parliament, which is what this parliament is for. We have debated it at the last Labor Party conference in 2009, and I will continue to debate it at any public forum where it is raised.

Our government has an economic strategy that is working and that is bringing Queensland out of the financial crisis which the entire world felt the repercussions of. And guess what? It is delivering jobs at a time when those opposite, if they had their way, would have been cutting jobs. Speaking of jobs, it is pretty hard to know who has what job on the other side at the moment. We know that the Leader of the Opposition about 12 months ago—I am not the only member of the House who is having an anniversary at the moment—took over the position that he now holds. In doing so, he took the extraordinary step—I think unprecedented in politics—of putting the former leader in as his deputy, saying that he would be a mentor for him.

What we have seen from day one, which everybody on this side of the House knew would happen, has been constant undermining of the member for Surfers Paradise. What have we seen in the two weeks since this House last met? The member for Southern Downs has been on the phone talking to the media about people in his own team having a birthday party. You cannot have a few birthday drinks in the LNP without the member for Southern Downs getting on the phone saying, 'Bring on the camera.' I note that he has not interjected and claimed it to be untrue.

### Taxes and Charges

**Mr LANGBROEK:** The Premier had to use that one up a bit earlier than she planned to, didn't she? My second question without notice is also directed to the Premier. Before the election the Premier gave a commitment. 'Queensland households are under real financial pressure,' she said. 'I will not kick them when they are down and I will not abolish the petrol subsidy.' The petrol subsidy has since been scrapped, car registration has increased by 20 per cent, and now tolls on the Gateway Bridge will rise by one-quarter. On what date did the Premier decide households are no longer under financial pressure, or is it a fact that the Premier is kicking people when they are down?

**Ms BLIGH:** I thank the honourable member for the question. He actually asked a number of questions. In answer to his first question—did we have to use that one earlier—no, we have plenty more where that one came from. Don't you worry about that. In relation to the question of households being under financial pressure, I am very conscious, as I think any hardworking member of parliament would be, that there are many people, not just here in Queensland but across Australia and many parts of the world, who have suffered financial stress. Why? Because we have seen the worst financial crisis—

**Mr Horan:** Queensland had the petrol tax, the rego, the electricity, the gas, the water—not the overseas people, Queenslanders.

**Mr Lucas:** Good on you, Coach.

**Ms BLIGH:** We will keep 'Coach Horan' in the box for a little bit longer. We have the mentor and the coach, and isn't he doing well with both of them?

The global financial crisis hurt households. It hurt state and federal budgets. It hurt investors. It hurt businesses. And, yes, there are many people doing it tough. That is why in our recent budgets we have put in place a range of increases and new rebates to assist people, particularly pensioners, where they are finding it difficult. When it comes to things like electricity, water and rates, Queensland has some of the most generous rebates for pensioners in Australia. Under our government they can continue to expect that kind of help.

I note the member for Surfers Paradise raised the question of tolls. I think it is time we talked about the member for Clayfield's approach were he to be in a position to make decisions on these matters. We have plenty of record to go on. The member for Clayfield was the head of finance when the Brisbane City Council, under Lord Mayor Newman, determined the tolls on the Clem7. In 2005 they committed to a toll of \$2, but by 2006, as finance spokesman, the member for Clayfield increased it by nearly 50 per cent in one year to \$3.30. When it comes to lifting the price of tolls, when it comes to lifting rates, go and check out the member for Clayfield's credibility. When it comes to putting pressure on ratepayers, the member for Clayfield is an expert at it. If the member for Clayfield had a chance to be on the treasury bench, he would take the same attitude he took when he was in the Brisbane City Council—lifting rates in breach of an election commitment and lifting the toll on the new north-south bypass tunnel so that it is the most expensive toll road in the country.

### Primary Schools

**Mrs SMITH:** My question is also to the Premier. Would the Premier update the House on the progress of one of the Bligh government's key election commitments that is benefiting our primary school students?

**Ms BLIGH:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I note just how much good work she does in the schools in her electorate. The member for Burleigh, like the rest of my team, understands the awesome power of education to transform lives and create opportunities. Just over 12 months ago we were elected to protect jobs and to make the decisions that needed to be made in the toughest of financial circumstances, but we also went to the election with a number of commitments that thought about where Queensland and our economy should be long into the future.

Part of our election commitments included a \$43.5 million Science Spark program to improve the performance and enrolments in the sciences in primary and secondary schools. Why? Because a smart, modern, diverse economy in the 21st century will be driven by science and knowledge. We have seen not just in Queensland but right around Australia and in many other Western countries a decline in enrolments in sciences at secondary school and in tertiary education.

We know that a child's love of science starts in primary school. That is why we have made a commitment to bring 100 specialist science teachers into the primary school sector. This is the first time that a central program allocating specialist science teachers into our primary schools has occurred in Queensland. I am pleased to advise the House that we are doing what we said we would do—that is, delivering election commitments. All of those new science specialists will be in schools teaching when term 2 starts next month. They have been allocated to schools. That is an election commitment that is rolling out as we speak.

What it will do is help primary school children develop a better understanding and passion for science in the early years of learning. In addition to those new science teachers, we have 15 new regional science managers.

**Mr Messenger** interjected.

**Ms BLIGH:** They are working with years 4 to 7 teachers to develop their knowledge and skills in science. I take the interjection from the member for Burnett. I am happy to advise him that we will have scientists trained in science talking about the issues of climate and the effects of human population on our climate.

**Mr Messenger** interjected.

**Ms BLIGH:** I know the member for Burnett thinks that we should be teaching creation science in our schools. We will be delivering scientists—

**Mr MESSENGER:** I find those words offensive. I ask that the Premier withdraw them.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member found the words offensive.

**Ms BLIGH:** I withdraw whatever the member found offensive. What we intend to do as a government is to continue to roll out extra resources into our primary schools to ensure that young people can be part of the great opportunities that this century will offer them here and overseas and to be part of developing solutions and new ideas to the problems that we will face as a people in this century, including climate change.

### Road User Charges

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Transport. I refer to the Connecting SEQ 2031 report due to be released midyear. Will the minister confirm that one of the funding models being costed is a road user charge of 5c to 30c a kilometre for all cars in South-East Queensland?

**Ms NOLAN:** My recollection is that the nickname for the member for Southern Downs when he was at school was 'Speedy' on the basis that sometimes it took a little while for the now member for Southern Downs to catch up. My very clear recollection is that this subject was debated in the parliament a number of weeks ago. At that time, the government made it abundantly clear that it is not contemplating a policy of introducing a congestion charge for South-East Queensland roads. This government specifically ruled out such a policy.

When it comes to transport in South-East Queensland we have a very clear position. Our position is to build better infrastructure for South-East Queensland commuters. This government currently has two major busway projects underway—the Northern Busway from Windsor through to Kedron in the northern suburbs and the Eastern Busway from Buranda through to Coorparoo. Both of those projects will significantly improve commuting times. Those projects are currently underway and they are part of this government's costed plan for South-East Queensland public transport infrastructure.

Similarly, right now this government is extending rail from Darra to Richlands just as it has recently finished a brand-new stage of Gold Coast rail from Robina to Varsity Lakes. This government is in the process of rolling out 301,000 new public transport seats per week on public transport across the network—ferry, bus and train—including two new trains which went into service on the Gold Coast line in December, with no road user charge.

This government has a very clear plan—no road user charge, better public transport infrastructure and more services. In contrast, that side was going to cut services. A three per cent cut in public transport would have meant 170,000 fewer seats each week. There is a clear contrast. No user charge but better public transport for the south-east is our policy. That is in contrast to the other side which would have made cuts. Quite rightly the people chose us.

### Airport Link, Jobs

**Ms DARLING:** My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier update the House on how many workers are employed on the Airport Link project and how important this project is to growth management in Queensland?

**Ms BLIGH:** I thank the member for the question. As the member would know, because she drives this area very often, extraordinary progress is now being made on the Airport Link project. Because, like all major road projects of its kind, it has protective barriers up, it is not always possible to understand the enormity of what is happening in and around this project. This is a \$4.8 billion congestion buster project. As of today there are 2,700 workers on site as part of the project.

That will not be the end of employment on this project because it expects to ramp up to a peak in coming months of around 3,000 jobs. That is 3,000 jobs that were likely to have hit the ground if the other side had had an opportunity to form a government. These projects are essential to manage growth and the pressures of our growing population.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Ms BLIGH:** I take the interjection because it was this very member who stood in front of TV cameras and said, 'We will have to cut some infrastructure projects.' Of course those opposite never told us which ones. We can be pretty sure that some of them would have hit the ground—

**Mr Nicholls:** We said we wouldn't build the Traveston Dam. Look what happened there. You couldn't build it—\$265 million lost. Tell us about that.

**Ms BLIGH:** Mr Speaker—

**Mr Lucas:** And you'll regret that forever. You have set the standard for stopping dams being built in Queensland.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Both sides of the House will come to order.

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The Deputy Premier will cease interjecting.

**Ms BLIGH:** We know that with more people we need to cater for that growth and put in place the infrastructure. It is about more roads like the Airport Link, which will take 18 traffic lights out of the path between the CBD and the airport. But it is also about public transport. Part of the Airport Link project is the Northern Busway that will connect to our growing bus and rail network. The other component of this is the airport flyover. Those members who have been out to the airport regularly will know that it is taking shape. What this will do is eliminate that bottleneck from the Brisbane road network forever.

This is a massive project. It is the biggest in Australia. It does have an impact on locals and I thank them for their patience. I am pleased to say that we now have construction underway on a two-kilometre conveyor belt that will take material out of the tunnel as it is bored. Some 80,000 truck movements a year will be avoided as a result of that conveyor belt.

This is a project that symbolises what our government is about—creating jobs, investing in community and leaving a legacy of infrastructure that people need as we grow. That is what we went to the election promising. That is what we have delivered. We will see more and more of it over the term of this government.

### Road User Charges

**Ms SIMPSON:** My question is to the Minister for Transport. I refer the minister to the Connecting SEQ 2031 report due to be released midyear. Will the minister confirm that one of the funding models being costed is an annual levy of \$100 per vehicle in South-East Queensland?

**Ms NOLAN:** No. The government is not considering either a road user charge or an additional vehicle charge or levy of some kind. Those things are not a part of the government's plan and they are not a part of the government's agenda. As I outlined a moment ago, the government has a clear position on these matters. We are building better public transport infrastructure right now and we are rolling out more services on public transport right now.

In contrast, the LNP went to the last election with a proposition to cut services by three per cent and, in the case of public transport, that would have meant 174,000 fewer seats on buses, on ferries and on trains across South-East Queensland every week. Similarly, the LNP went to the last election trying to trick people in Redcliffe and in the far northern suburbs of Brisbane around Moreton Bay shire with its proposition to build a new rail service. The opposition went to the election promising initially to build the Petrie to Kippa-Ring rail line, and the commitment was made by the shadow minister early in the campaign. It was reported in the *Redcliffe and Bayside Herald* in these terms—

THE Petrie to Kippa-Ring rail link will be built with or without federal funding if the LNP is elected. In an announcement on Friday morning, Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Main Roads and Transport, Fiona Simpson said construction on the rail line would start during the party's first term ...

**Ms Simpson:** If there was federal funding in the first term.

**Ms NOLAN:** The report talks about the LNP. The *Pine Rivers Press* said—

The LNP has already promised it will build the Petrie to Kippa-Ring rail link by 2016 with or without federal funding if it wins the March 21 election.

Later it turned out that that promise was subject to the global financial crisis. We have a plan—we are building it now—and it is not to cut seats.

*(Time expired)*

## Health Services

**Mr WELLS:** My question is to the Deputy Premier in his capacity as Minister for Health, and I ask: will the minister advise what steps the government is taking to build a strong medical workforce to tackle the challenge of a growing and ageing population?

**Mr LUCAS:** One thing is for sure: if you have children looking for a career, you can assure them that a career in health will be secure. It is a growing sector. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's report *Australia's health 2008*, between 2001 and 2006 there was 23 per cent growth in the number of people employed in the health occupations. That is almost double that of all other occupations. In 2009 Queensland universities had a higher number of QTAC applications for places in health industries than for any other courses. The federal government's announcement last week to increase training places for GPs and medical specialists is very welcome indeed. Queensland has done the heavy lifting since 2005 to bring more than 2,500 extra doctors into the workforce and double our intern numbers. Intern places will go from 280 in 2005 to 556 this year and 644 next year—that is, trainee doctors.

But it is not just about training interns, and this is where the federal government announcement is really important; it is about where we go from here. Our unique—that is, decentralised—GP workforce is more thinly spread but is still concentrated in the south-east corner. It also places more demands on hospitals and EDs in areas of GP shortage—many regional cities. The vast majority of Queensland's health specialists are also based in South-East Queensland. Training more specialists means more elective surgery and more outpatient appointments. However, we do have critical shortages and longer waits for patients of specialists in regional and country towns. Training more specialists in regional Queensland will mean that fewer and fewer specialists are subject to burnout.

Queensland Health gets the opportunity to dictate where we will train our specialists. We get the opportunity to say, for example, that we want employees to spend a period of their time in regional Queensland. The most important thing that we can do is provide more and more regional specialists, and we will continue to do that. How we do that is using our position to actually determine that. There are three benefits: we will improve the trainee's specialist skill base; we will provide increased services at their level to their patients; and we will provide additional support to all existing regional specialists, meaning fewer call-outs and the like. The focus on rural and regional training places will make a huge difference. There is significant anecdotal evidence to suggest that doctors are more likely to stay in a community where they have been trained.

We are pleased that the federal government has come on board to build on Queensland's hard work to grow our medical workforce. We will need more specialists and more GPs to manage rising chronic diseases and our ageing population. Health is not just about building facilities, and we are doing that; health is also about training doctors, nurses and allied health professionals. It is a great pity that not everybody recognises the importance of this. In many regional communities we have some specialists who might be the only person in town. That means that they are on call constantly, unlike specialists in South-East Queensland. The more we can provide these people for those communities, the better we can have them supported and the less likely we are to have burnout and the more likely we are to have sustainable services.

## Road User Charges

**Mr NICHOLLS:** My question is to the transport minister. I refer the minister to the Connecting SEQ 2031 report due to be released midyear. Will the minister confirm that one of the funding models being costed is an annual levy on local government rates of up to \$100 per property in South-East Queensland?

**Ms NOLAN:** Let me be clear about this matter. There is one side of politics in Queensland that has released an integrated regional transport plan which contemplates a congestion charge. That side of politics is the old National Party. In 1997 the then National Party government, under the then transport and main roads minister Vaughan Johnson, released an integrated regional transport plan for South-East Queensland which contemplated a congestion charge for the south-east.

This government is currently finalising its consideration of the next integrated regional transport plan for South-East Queensland, but it has specifically, on the public record, ruled out new road and other kinds of charges. The integrated regional transport plan, which is currently being finalised, will not include new road charges. What it will include is the next round of infrastructure planning, building on the work that we are currently doing to build new busways and to extend rail and to preserve corridors—corridors which opposition members frequently oppose when they come to their own parts of the world—in order to build the next stage of public transport infrastructure for the south-east.

Similarly, when the integrated regional transport plan is released it will talk about the next stages of growth in public transport services. Again in that regard, this government has the runs on the board. In the last five years there has been around a doubling of public transport spending in South-East Queensland and there has been a massive growth in public transport patronage on buses, on trains and on ferries around the region. This government understands that public transport is sustainable transport and, if South-East Queensland is to grow sustainably, it is essential that we plan for our public transport future. This government is building now, it is delivering services now, and it is doing the next round of planning. But that planning does not include new road user charges—unlike the plan put forward by the LNP when it was last in government.

### Green Jobs

**Mr O'BRIEN:** My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer update the House on the Bligh government's commitment to creating green jobs?

**Mr FRASER:** I thank the member for Cook for his question and his commitment to supporting job-generating programs that give young Queenslanders in particular a chance to get into the workforce, to get a purchase in life and to move ahead—jobs, under our \$57 million Green Army commitment, which are there to support not only those young people getting a job but also the great natural environment of this state, which, in fact, is best represented by the member's electorate of Cook.

I can report to this House that our Green Army project is on track and delivering jobs for young Queenslanders. It started ahead of time and already it has \$14.8 million in approved projects underway, 883 work placements underway, along with 151 training placements. We have passed the 1,000 mark, well ahead of the one-year anniversary of the Green Army commitment as we ramp up a program that is there to deliver jobs for young Queenslanders and to support our environment. Just like our commitment to jobs generation, which has seen us grow jobs in the state by more than 24,000 over the past six months—including 3,700 last month—this government is getting on with growing jobs and developing our economy.

While we have been growing jobs and developing our economy, what has the opposition in this place been developing? It has developed zero policies. It has developed a jobs target of zero. What has it grown? It has grown a pumpkin. So far it has grown a pumpkin, not a policy. And holy moley, she is a big one. It might be a very worthwhile thing to grow a pumpkin and to put it on display, but I think out there in the community there is a real harking desire that the opposition put something other than a pumpkin on display. Perhaps we could suggest that the opposition put a policy on display—perhaps a policy for dealing with how to react to the global financial crisis, how to chart a course for the future.

But who needs policies, who can get around to developing policies when you are so riven by infighting, as the members opposite are? Last week, when the snitch was on the phone to the newspaper about the story, we can imagine the conversation—'I've got a story for you and, holy moley, she's a big one. You won't believe what they are up to now.' The members opposite need to know that out there in the community the people are looking for the opposition to put forward policy alternatives. Listen to their silence. Their silence is deafening, just as their silence on policy development is deafening and just as their silence on disavowing the three per cent cut is deafening. Under their do nothing, develop no policies, zero jobs target approach, they condemn this state to \$25 billion worth of more debt.

On this side of the chamber we are committed to delivering on our policies, making the hard decisions, seeing them through, generating jobs and developing the economy. That is what people will see from this government as we go into our second year. The people of Queensland want to see from the other side just one policy, not a big pumpkin.

### Sale of Public Assets

**Mr SEENEY:** My question is to the Premier. I refer to the comments in recent days from federal Labor ministers Anthony Albanese and Martin Ferguson in relation to the government's plans for selling Queensland Rail, and I ask: if the Premier will not listen to the Queensland Resources Council, if the Premier will not listen to the coal companies and if the Premier will not listen to the trade unions, will the Premier listen to these federal Labor ministers when they say that this plan is detrimental to Queensland's long-term future?

**Ms BLIGH:** So now the LNP supports privatisation as long as the coal companies get a crack at it. We have known from day one, of course, that they support privatisation. They went to the election with a policy supporting it. The member for Callide has just let the cat right out of the bag. The members opposite want a situation where the largest multinational companies on earth get to buy a Queensland asset instead of Queensland mums and dads. We believe that Queensland Rail—QRNational—will be an ASX top 50 company. It will be headquartered in Queensland. This will be a great thing for the Queensland economy and for the Australian economy.

What do we see today? We see people of the calibre of Allan Fels being quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald*—but the report has been out for some time—saying that vertical integration of commercial rail lines is world's best practice. You will find that the most successful commercial rail lines in Canada and in the northern parts of America are vertically integrated rail lines. I note that there are some—

**Mr Fraser:** Release a policy.

**Ms BLIGH:** I think we just heard a policy and the policy of those opposite is that, when it comes to asset sales, when it comes to the sale of the commercial arm of Queensland Rail, it should go to the coal companies—14 of the biggest companies, not ordinary investors, not Queenslanders. Not Queenslanders, no; the opposition says that it should go to coal companies.

We stand for a strong QRNational that will grow because it can leverage private investment in which Queenslanders will get a preferential share, in which mums, dads and workers will get an allocation. This plan makes it possible for Queensland Rail workers to work for a great Queensland company in which they hold shares. Under the plan of those opposite, the Queensland Rail workers would—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms BLIGH:** Those opposite want QR workers to be employees of Rio Tinto and BHP. We want them to be employees of a great Queensland company owned by Australians and Queenslanders in which they hold shares. That is what we stand for. Now we know what they stand for.

### Capital Works Projects

**Mr WENDT:** My question is to the Minister for Public Works. Could the minister inform the House what projects the Department of Public Works anticipates letting next month and the effect they will have on the future growth of Queensland?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I thank the honourable member for the question and I thank him for his recent company at two of our bigger projects—one at Lotus Glen and one at Gatton. The one at Gatton alone is creating 3½ thousand jobs. Members might recall that this time last year there was an election. During that election campaign those opposite promised that they would cut the building program. So to put that into some focus, I have some figures on what we are going to do just next month, leaving aside all of those other great big projects that we have. There are \$86 million worth of projects that are out there in the next month. That means \$86 million worth of jobs in Queensland—from the Southport courthouse right up to Mornington Island.

In Project Services, there is \$57 million worth of expenditure and 400 jobs. They are 400 jobs that would not have existed had those opposite been elected to government. The members opposite promised to slash ICT expenditure. They made it very clear that they would get savings out of ICT. What are we spending? There are six projects worth \$17 million—jobs in smart industries in ICT and making government work even better. In QBuild—which, of course, they would privatise—there is \$12 million worth of projects right across Queensland and work for subcontractors, with 60 per cent of those jobs going out the door.

**Mr Springborg:** Did you turn your computer on?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I hear the interjection from the member for Southern Downs who sits opposite. He is a mixture of Judas Iscariot and Brutus. He would never see a back that he would not stab. 'Leave no back unstabbed' is his policy. Of course, he was there at the last supper, ear cocked to the wall—I think they might have put on another red wine. Did I hear another cork come out there? I must update them. I am told that the honourable member over there put on some very nice wines. He was entitled to, having reached his dotage like he has. He is entitled to have a few glasses of wine with a few of his mates. We live in Queensland, not in wowser land.

But it was not the wowser aspect of it; it was the underhanded, backstabbing running off to the media. Wouldn't you love to be on their team? They cannot even have a couple of shandies with their mates without someone running to the papers and dobbing them in. Wouldn't you love to be on that side of the House?



**Mr Springborg** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** He who protests the loudest is the one with the biggest bayonet—ask the member for Callide; ask the member for Toowoomba South.

**Mr Lucas:** Supergrass!

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Not only a supergrass but a superstabber as well. 'No back shall be unstabbed' is his No. 1 policy. I welcome that aspect of his character. At least we know where he stands in that regard: with a bayonet right behind someone.

### Cyclone Shelters

**Mr MALONE:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Emergency Services. In 2006 the Labor Premier used Cyclone Larry to promise to build category 5 cyclone shelters in every community between Cooktown and Bundaberg. Four cyclone seasons later, I ask: how many of the 12 promised shelters have been constructed and where?

**Mr ROBERTS:** I think it is probably best to put into context the actual commitment that was made and I will read that out for the House. The member has a history of extrapolating in his own words and his own imagination what commitments are. I will put on the record what the actual commitment is and then tell members what we have done. In the lead-up to the election the Premier committed to—

providing specially equipped cyclone shelters as part of the planning and budgeting process for upgrading existing, or incorporating within, selected new public buildings in the most cyclone prone areas, from Bundaberg north to the Torres Strait and in western Cape York.

That is exactly what we have done. I saw a transcript of what the member said when speaking about this issue on ABC Radio last week. He did confuse the two issues. There are, in fact, two issues with respect to cyclones. There are cyclone shelters, which are designed to cater for high winds, and there are evacuation centres. Evacuation centres are part of every local disaster management plan. Local councils work with Emergency Management Queensland and others to identify particular locations where people go to after an event for support. Cyclone shelters are a different issue. It is actually an issue that the Minister for Public Works is directly involved in. His department has been working with a number of agencies, both state and local government, in identifying new buildings that are coming on stream, schools in particular, and strengthening the design capabilities of those buildings for cyclone shelters.

In recent times we had a community cabinet in Innisfail. That was held in one of those buildings, a very large facility, that can house many hundreds of people during cyclones. The buildings that are either completed or close to completion are at Innisfail, Redlynch and Kowanyama. As I have indicated, the government is working with agencies and councils to identify and upgrade the design of buildings as they come on line.

The reality with cyclones is that the safest place is in the strongest room in your home. The last thing we need in cyclones is to have hundreds or thousands of people leaving their homes heading for cyclone shelters. We certainly need shelters throughout the community as safe buildings that ultimately can house response capabilities, but the clear message to communities when a cyclone is approaching is that the safest place for them to be is inside their home or business in the strongest room. That is the information that needs to be given out to the community. The government is demonstrating that it is rolling out that policy. That will continue over the coming years. As new buildings are built they will be upgraded to those specifications.

### Drought Proofing

**Ms CROFT:** My question is to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade. With welcome rain in the south-east and dam levels approaching the magic 100 per cent mark, can the minister please advise what contingencies are in place for the next drought?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I thank the honourable member for the question because it is an excellent demonstration of planning to meet the needs of a growing region such as South-East Queensland. The \$9 billion South-East Queensland water grid is all about securing water supplies now and for the future. The work continues. To roll out massive infrastructure such as we have done requires a commitment now and into the future. The new Ewen Maddock water treatment plant is up and running. That represents about a \$41 million investment that supplies around 1,700 megalitres per year to the Sunshine Coast. We have also started the \$800 million water pipeline interconnector stage 2, which will mean an extra 65 megalitres per day of treated water that can be transferred between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast.

On the Gold Coast, member for Broadwater, we are seeing the raising of the Hinze Dam so the Gold Coast will never return to the drought conditions it experienced only a number of years ago. That raising will increase the capacity of the Hinze Dam to some 300,000 megalitres. It will also include a flood mitigation storage of some 800,000 megalitres, which will be an innumerable benefit to the people of the Gold Coast.

This significant investment in infrastructure comes at a price. We have had to see, as a result of that, increases in water prices across South-East Queensland. It is regrettable but it is necessary. Contrast that honesty with the commitment to underground all powerlines in South-East Queensland over the next 20 to 25 years. We heard this morning that it would cost around \$56 billion. That represents \$2 billion to \$3 billion each year over that period which the opposition would have to commit to if it were to carry through with this policy. As the member for Callide said, they have been on about this for 10 years. They have gone through three election campaigns without uttering a word about this commitment. Let us take the time now to nail their colours to the mast. The announcement by the Leader of the Opposition that they would have a 20- to 25-year strategy to underground power lines at a cost of \$56 billion means that they start the next election campaign \$3 billion in debt. There is only two ways to do it: slash infrastructure already underway or put up electricity prices to around \$14,000 per Queenslanders.

*(Time expired)*

### Blue Card

**Ms DAVIS:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport. Applicants for a blue card in Queensland can claim one of three genders: male, female and indeterminate. New South Wales, based on crown law advice, has reversed an earlier decision to recognise a person as being neither a man nor a woman. How many people of indeterminate gender have Queensland blue cards and what is the minister's legal advice on their validity?

**Mr REEVES:** I thank the honourable member for the question but I think she should ask that question to the appropriate minister.

### Schools, Infrastructure

**Ms STONE:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Education and Training. Could the minister outline to the House how the Bligh government is delivering on its commitment to build and rebuild Queensland schools to help cope with our increasing population?

**Mr WILSON:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I recognise the hard work that she puts in to her school communities, both state and non-state. The Bligh government is focused upon investing in our education system to build a world-class education system for the future. It is building on all of the strengths that we have right now. The government is not only investing in our students in terms of new curriculum and teachers through new quality measures but also investing in new infrastructure. We are doing this because population growth is putting added pressure on our schools throughout the state.

Not only do we want to make sure that new schools are being built to deal with the population pressures that are occurring, particularly in the south-east corner; we also want to make sure that we are developing, renewing and refurbishing the existing schools within our state school system. That is why we have an \$850 million State Schools of Tomorrow infrastructure building program in place, which over the period of the program has generated about 6,550 jobs and is still being rolled out. As part of that, recently we announced an investment of \$14 million to build new science laboratories in high schools, in addition to the ones we are already building. With that additional \$14 million, we will be able to build 296 new science laboratories in many state high schools.

We are also rolling out a \$4 million program, the Smart Schools Subsidy Scheme, to 31 schools to help particular improvement projects such as new art rooms, remodelled kitchens and so on—for example, the kitchen at the Kimberley Park State School in the member's electorate. Also we are putting \$50 million into the non-state sector for capital improvements. We have announced an extra five schools, taking to 100 the number of schools benefiting from that capital investment in the non-state school sector. Why are we investing in both sectors? Because we believe that parents should have a choice about the sector in which they enrol their children. We will continue that support.

Where is the LNP on plans, policies and new ideas for education and training? I have checked the LNP website and there is nothing. I have checked the website of the member for Moggill and there is nothing. I have checked the website of the member for Surfers Paradise and there is nothing. We know that policy innovation is happening with the member for Beaudesert, but I have checked his website and, regrettably, there is nothing there. They have invited former Prime Minister Howard to help them fill in the blanks and now they are asking for Barnaby Joyce to help them as well.

*(Time expired)*

### Kingaroy, Underground Coal Gasification Project

**Mrs PRATT:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability. Given the lack of any positive, long-term environmental data being able to be unearthed by concerned residents of Kingaroy about underground coal gasification, will the minister table the successful UCG project data on which this government based its support for Cougar Energy's pilot project to be undertaken on the very edge of the Kingaroy township? If data from the Chinchilla UCG site was used, what long-term monitoring was or is being conducted at that particular UCG site?

**Ms JONES:** I thank the honourable member for the question. As always, and as the member well knows, if she has any issues involving the environment she is more than welcome to discuss them with me. I wish to be very clear: when it comes to any type of mining in Queensland we have a strong record in terms of the environment. In the past three years we have more than doubled the number of staff looking into the compliance of mines in Queensland. The staff continue to work with Cougar Energy and other mining companies throughout Queensland to ensure that they comply.

In the past 12 months we have also seen a significant increase in the fines issued to mining companies that break the law, because we take seriously our environmental responsibilities under the legislation introduced into Queensland by Labor governments. To be clear, ERA fees were increased to ensure that we could double our staff. We have increased environmentally relevant activity fees—including those that affect the behaviours that the member is talking about—in order to double our compliance staff. This was opposed by those opposite. They continue to write to me opposing this, because they do not believe in the strong credentials that we have with regard to mining.

In regard to the underground coal gasification system referred to by the member, the Minister for Mines and I are working to ensure that we get the best technology. Reporting requirements are a condition of the licensing arrangement and we continue to monitor the reporting requirements and licensing conditions. As I said, not only do we put conditions on individual mines that they have to meet in regard to their licensing requirements—and they have to continue to monitor and provide that information to us; we have also strengthened that by increasing our workforce, the sole responsibility of which is to make sure they are doing just that.

I am happy to meet directly with the member to discuss this in further detail, but I assure all members of the House that this is something we take very seriously. Despite having no bipartisan support on the issue, we will continue to do that going forward.

### Surat Basin

**Mr SHINE:** I direct my question to the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland. Can the minister please update the House on what the office of rural and regional Queensland is doing to manage growth in the rapidly expanding Surat Basin?

**Mr MULHERIN:** I thank the honourable member for Toowoomba North for the question. As members know, the member for Toowoomba North takes a keen interest in Toowoomba and the surrounding regions, including the Surat Basin.

Last week in Roma the Premier announced \$23.65 million in funding for infrastructure and services for the Surat Basin. That funding is part of the \$100 million sustainable communities funding package to resource communities to deal with growth. The emergence of the \$40 billion LNG industry will bring unprecedented growth to the Surat Basin and we want to ensure that growth is properly managed.

Last week the Premier attended a forum that outlined ways in which local communities, local governments, state and federal governments and industry could work together to manage the rapid growth associated with this expected boom in the LNG and coal seam gas industry. The forum was well attended by representatives from community groups, the chamber of commerce, unions and local government. Those representatives raised concerns such as the need for the workforce to live locally, as well as the need for well-serviced communities with adequate infrastructure, including health, education, roads, medical services, water and so on, long-term planning and sustainability, and government partnerships working with industry and the community.

This is an important part of our overall population growth management strategy to create opportunities in the regions, particularly regions where there are great job opportunities. The only way that will work is to ensure that we have areas where people want to live and raise a family. That is why part of this package included \$4.7 million to upgrade the Roma airport and why other funding has been provided to improve health and ambulance services. There is a whole range of things such as road projects which will be funded through the \$23.5 million.

This government is getting on with the job, planning for the future and ensuring we have a Queensland that people want to work and live in. Contrast that with the opposition, which has no plans, no policies and no ideas. That is why those opposite are stuck in the past. They have asked John Howard to help them out because they are stuck in the past with no ideas and no policy.

### Crab Dillies

**Dr ROBINSON:** My question is to the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland. Given that turtle deaths were the government's stated reason for the state-wide ban on inverted crab dillies to begin in early April and given the government's admission, in answer to question on notice No. 31, that there has been only one recorded turtle death in Queensland waters since 2005 from crab dillies, will the minister reverse this ridiculous ban as it is clear it has no scientific basis?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The minister has two minutes.

**Mr MULHERIN:** I thank the honourable member. The short answer is no, we will not be reversing this ban. This is about ensuring that we have a sustainable fishery. The member may not know that inverted dillies are used for the blue swimmer crab fishery. The blue swimmer crab fishery required federal approval under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Under that act, the federal government places restrictions or conditions because of the wildlife trade operation. Part of that was to look at the impact that fishing apparatus would have on protected species such as turtles.

This issue was addressed by CrabMAC, which is made up of representatives of the crab-fishing industry, conservationists, scientists and recreational fishers. We issued a regulatory impact statement, and 75 per cent of respondents agreed with the proposal to phase these things out. Amendments were made on 12 December. We do not plan to reverse that decision. As I have said, this is all about ensuring that people who are involved in the commercial fishery have access to not only local markets but also interstate markets. It is conditioned under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

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

## MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

### Sale of Public Assets

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): This morning we have seen the Premier running away and squibbing a chance to have a public debate on Labor's privatisation plans. A challenge was issued to the Premier this morning to have a public debate in a public forum. Kevin Rudd is prepared to have such a debate with Tony Abbott, but the Premier has squibbed and is refusing to have a privatisation debate until the next election.

By the time of the next election, more than \$15 billion of public assets will have been sold, including parts of Queensland Rail, the motorways, the ports and the forestry plantation. This shows why the majority of Queenslanders think that Anna Bligh, the Premier, did not tell the truth in the lead-up to the last election. We know that the Premier told mistruths to the people of Queensland. Now she wants to scurry away from having a public debate about these mistruths. It is very clear. She does not want to have a privatisation debate, does not want to have a referendum, does not want to have an ALP conference, does not want to have a special people's question time and has refused to have a public debate.

This weekend just gone marked the fact that 12 months ago the people of Queensland were conned. They trusted this Premier and her government to deliver on a plan to secure the prosperity of this great state of ours. But instead they got a mistruth, a great big mistruth. Since then they have got excuses, and they are tired of excuses. A year ago almost to the day they were taken for a ride. They were told 'jobs not cuts'. But instead this Premier and her mean and tricky little Treasurer hid the details of the plans that they undoubtedly had to sell off key state assets in a fire sale.

The people of Queensland were not told of the great mistruth before the last election. They were not told of the Premier's plan to raise public debt from \$64 billion to almost \$85 billion over the forward estimates. It is obscene in how much it is, it is obscene in how quickly the Labor Party has clocked it up and it is obscene in the burden that it places on every Queensland child and family for years and years to come. In the last week we have seen this obscenity on show. We have seen the government continue its ham-fisted plan to sell off the farm at the expense of future generations of Queenslanders.

The LNP and I are against a fire sale of key assets. We are against the money being spent on simply paying down interest because Labor cannot balance the books, and I am against the underhanded, sneaky and, quite frankly, deceitful way this Premier and her little Treasurer have gone about deceiving the people of Queensland to keep this tired old Labor government afloat. It must be clear to those on the other side that their days on the treasury bench are coming to an end. The people of Queensland are fast making up their minds that they want this mean, sneaky and arrogant government to come to an end, and the people of Queensland are fast forming the opinion that this Premier is simply keeping the seat warm until later in this term when the faceless men of the Labor Party choose who will be Queensland's new tsar.

In the last week we have seen the Premier and her little Treasurer take yet another step in their arrogant plan to sell off the assets. Last week we found the government had decided to fatten up the cow for market day. The media got wind of the government's decision to jack up tolls on the Gateway Bridge and the Logan Motorway. In a desperate and dirty attempt to make the toll roads more profitable and therefore fetch a better price when they are sold off, this arrogant government is hitting Queenslanders twice. When they eventually sell off Queensland Motorways, the innocent commuter will ultimately have to pay. Many of them have put their trust in this Premier and Treasurer. When they travel to work each day, when many of them visit family and friends and when many of them try to drive to a hospital, they will be paying a higher toll, and when the motorways are sold the tolls will go up even higher.

The Treasurer is sounding like Wayne Swan, his federal counterpart, before the last election. Wayne Swan in the election campaign of 2004 said that the money that was offered by the then Treasurer Peter Costello was 'not real money'. The Treasurer last week said that an increase of 90c was actually only an increase of 35c. That is the cost of the toll increase for a normal car but some vehicles will cost up to \$10 to cross the Gateway Bridge. This is a Treasurer who has lost touch. He cannot accept that the people of Queensland find this increase harsh and unjust. He has spent so long having someone else pay his fuel bills that he thinks this extra increase is not real money. Tell that to the people who are having to pay hundreds of dollars more per month to go across the Gateway Bridge and are having to top up their accounts. This is another impost on top of registration costs and on top of the other charges that we know have made this the most expensive state in the country in which to own and register a car.

The people of Queensland are sick of this government which thinks that the good people of Queensland have bottomless pockets that can pay more and more for a government that is unable to control its spending. Spending is in Labor's DNA. They cannot escape it. Like Gollum to the ring—they just cannot help themselves. From its earliest days, to the Whitlam government, to the excesses of the last almost 20 years here in Queensland, the Labor Party has never been able to control its hunger for higher taxes and more spending, and it is the ordinary and hardworking men and women of Queensland who have to pay more for this government. Now through higher tolls and privatised roads, the people of Queensland will cop it in the guts again.

Not only are they intent on jacking up tolls and hurting Queensland families, the Premier and Treasurer will never be honest and upfront with the people of Queensland. On notice, the opposition asked the Treasurer to advise the parliament and the people of Queensland what expenses this government had incurred to prosecute its so-called Renewing Queensland Plan—the plan to sell off the state's assets and deprive future generations of Queenslanders of the prosperity these assets create.

On 11 February this year, we asked the Treasurer to come clean with the people of Queensland and detail the cost for the Premier and the Labor Party to break faith with the people of Queensland and indeed their own supporters in the union movement, and what did the Treasurer say? He said nothing. In a 2½-line answer to our question on notice—so arrogant is this Treasurer, so out of touch is this Treasurer, so slippery is the Treasurer with Queenslanders' money—all he said was that the costs would be revealed in the Treasury's annual report which, as we all know, is usually published well into the following financial year. As every member of this House knows, it will almost be the end of 2011, possibly the start of 2012, before we see the annual report for this financial year—well into the future and the government of course will be hoping well after the fury that it has created dies down and the assets are all sold off. That is how sneaky this Treasurer is. He will not tell the people of Queensland how much money is being burnt up on propaganda, consultancies and marketing—all lining the pockets of, amongst others, Labor mates. In the meantime, all that money—the millions of dollars spent convincing the people of Queensland that selling the state's assets is good for them and that they should look the other way—could have been used to reduce waiting times in our public hospitals or spent on Reading Recovery teachers in Queensland's underfunded schools where tests show that there is a crisis of underachievement going on.

In the last week we saw the awful truth—and it was raised here again by the honourable member for Callide—of Labor's mismanaged plans to sell off Queensland Rail. In the last week and in the last couple of days we have seen Martin Ferguson and Anthony Albanese criticise this Premier and the Treasurer's plans to sell off parts of Queensland Rail. Martin Ferguson told it how it is—Labor's plans to sell off parts of Queensland Rail will not necessarily be the best way to create investment and jobs in the future. As I said, Anthony Albanese is opposed to the vertically integrated way that this incompetent state government is planning to sell off Queensland Rail. Anthony Albanese has slammed this government for potentially creating a monopoly in rail—creating a private monopoly from a public monopoly.

The model chosen has no efficiencies, no productivity improvements and more supply chain problems. The Premier and Treasurer should release the advice from their advisers saying why they are so insistent on selling QR as a monopoly. But this government will not even listen to its own senior federal colleagues. The Premier is determined to sell off Queensland Rail in a way that will damage the prosperity of this state for years to come.

We had the charming sight of the Treasurer calling the coal companies the dogs who caught the bus, but that is so typical of Labor. They fail Queenslanders. It does not matter what they do or say; it is just another Labor excuse. On Friday, to show how delusional and out of touch she is, the Premier had the audacity to put her unpopularity down to the fact that she is female. What an offensive statement! It is offensive because of what it says about what the Premier really thinks of her fellow Queenslanders, and it is offensive for the double standard that it perpetuates. What an offence to women everywhere, including in this place, and it shows her desperation.

The Premier, her Treasurer and this tired and worn-out government will do anything to cling to power. They lack the trust and competence to govern Queensland for the future. This Premier and her government are in terminal decline. We are determined to offer a strong alternative to restore the confidence in the people of Queensland. We will get back the AAA credit rating. We will express policies across a range of issues, big and small. Most importantly, we will do it with honesty and integrity, because that is what people expect of their leaders.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Wendt): Order! Before calling the next speaker, I acknowledge in the gallery students and teachers from Genesis Christian College of Bray Park, represented in this House by Carolyn Male, the member for Pine Rivers.

### Cyclone Ului

**Ms JARRATT** (Whitsunday—ALP) (11.40 am): Cyclone Ului sat in the Coral Sea for more than a week before turning to cross the coast right over Airlie Beach. This waiting time was put to good use by local communities, with house yards cleared of potential missiles, gutters cleaned, food bought and stored, boats moved to marinas and safer anchorages, and emergency response plans honed to a fine state of preparedness. By midnight on Saturday we had lost power and had bunkered down for what we knew was going to be a wild night.

This was my first cyclone, and there is no doubt that it is Mother Nature's most frightening and awe-inspiring personality. At one stage, Hamilton Island recorded wind gusts of over 200 kilometres an hour. For most of us, it is the sound of roaring wind and creaking buildings that will stay with us as an enduring cyclone memory. The eerie quiet of the cyclone's eye descended at around 2 am and gave us our first glimpse of the catastrophe occurring outside. While we were grateful that our house was basically still in one piece, it became obvious that the town's vegetation had been put through a blender. There was no real time for inspection, however, because we knew that the second act was about to begin.

Another three hours or so later, the worst of the wind had passed. Thus began the aftermath phase, which for many is continuing as I speak. Despite the ferocity of the winds, it has been widely concluded that on the whole we dodged a bullet when it came to structural damage. Across the region roofs were lost, sheds were destroyed, and signage and shade sails were shredded, but this was the exception rather than the rule. Perhaps the most devastating damage of all occurred to boats around the Whitsundays that either dragged anchor or moorings, or were crunched by these boats as they went by. Some boats are still unaccounted for; others are sunk or smashed on the rocks; while still others lie like beached whales high and dry and perfectly intact. Seeing boats like this is heartbreaking. I, for one, am now an absolute advocate for a new marina at Shute Harbour. If these boat owners had a safe harbour to retreat to, they may not now be left with such a devastating outcome. My thanks, and that of many boat owners in Airlie Beach, goes out to Meridien Marinas for opening its doors to so many boats like ours that habitually sit on a mooring in the bay. Their generosity undoubtedly saved many of us from losing our vessels.

The trees, gardens and sugarcane crops of the area were the other big losers in the cyclone. Many trees were partly stripped of leaves or, worse still, uprooted or broken into pieces. Our councils have done an amazing job of cleaning vegetation debris from the roads of the region, but the bigger task of removing green waste will go on for councils and homeowners for some time. Cane growers have an anxious wait until harvest time.

A very special mention must be made of the disaster management committees that sat throughout Saturday night and were ready to spring into action at first light on Sunday. It is an amazing commitment to leave your own family on such a night in the interests of many. I hope that they will accept this as the grateful thanks of a community for a job well done. The SES, of course, is another important element of the disaster management regime. As usual, these amazing volunteers were on hand to meet the first calls for help. Mackay and Whitsunday regional councils also deserve our thanks for their outstanding work both before and after the event.

I want to stress that, while we were lucky to survive with very little structural damage and no loss of life, the struggle will go on for those who have sustained damage to property and for those businesses that have lost trade and goods from the lack of power. In fact, power is yet to be restored to many homes. While I understand the frustration that this engenders, I know that Ergon is doing everything possible to mend a system that has been torn apart.

One of the biggest issues going forward will be to get our tourism reputation back on track. I am devastated to hear that bookings are being cancelled for the Easter holidays because we will, with very few exceptions, be back to business as usual by then. I have spoken to both the Premier and the tourism minister about the need for a quick response to this issue. I know that Tourism Queensland will be working to do what it can to assist. If people really want to help this community rebuild, they can do no better than to have their next holiday in the Whitsundays.

### **Toowoomba Disability Services Centre**

**Mr SHINE** (Toowoomba North—ALP) (11.45 am): St Patrick's Day in Toowoomba this year was especially memorable, for a newly refurbished \$1.4 million centre for people with a disability was officially opened by disability services minister, Anastacia Palaszczuk, in Toowoomba, despite renovations being stalled by two separate break-ins leading up to it. What is undoubtedly true and what was acknowledged by the minister was that the new purpose-built centre was an indication of Toowoomba's strong community spirit and willingness to support others. The local community raised \$500,000 to make this project a reality and the Bligh government was happy to provide another \$500,000 in capital funding, with the Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland contributing the remainder for what is an excellent facility.

The centre will make a genuine difference to the lives of the 50 adults and more than 80 children who go there, as well as to the lives of their families. Among a range of other services, the centre will give adult clients more opportunities to get out into the community and live productive and rewarding lives. The service run by the Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland, or CPL, had previously been split between two offices. CPL will deliver respite and accommodation services as well as a range of education, training and employment services. The upgraded facility has a purpose-built kitchen for life skills training, a therapy area, a music therapy room and a staff training area. The redevelopment will allow CPL to meet the increasing demand for disability services in the Toowoomba and south Queensland region generally.

The Scott Street centre was broken into twice within one month earlier this year. The Cerebral Palsy League was able to continue its service thanks only to generous support from the local community. Thanks and congratulations go to Toowoomba CPL members for their commitment to this project and for their ongoing commitment to people with a disability in the Darling Downs region. I am very pleased the Bligh government is committed to working with non-government owned disability service providers such as the Cerebral Palsy League. The Queensland government provides the CPL with \$4.3 million to support people with a physical disability in Toowoomba and the south Queensland region. State-wide, the CPL received almost \$41 million this financial year from the Bligh government.

The disability services minister, Anastacia Palaszczuk, also met with young people with a disability being assisted through a \$4 million Bligh government post-school education program. The sum of \$116,280 was allocated to help 11 young people with a disability in Toowoomba, which will allow them to participate in their local community after finishing school. This program is about giving young people with a disability a fair go after they finish school and more opportunities to live productive and fulfilling lives. The Post School Services Program helps school leavers to develop skills that will stay with them for life.

Locally, Hhelp Toowoomba provides these 11 young people with an opportunity to learn and earn that they otherwise would not have. Raising a teenager can be difficult for any parent. This program takes some of the time and financial pressure off parents and carers. This program gives young people with a disability the skills which put them in a position to gain employment or continue their education. By strengthening these young people's communication skills and teaching them practical skills like how to use a computer or catch public transport, we give them more independence and take a great deal of pressure off their parents. For all teenagers, enhancing social interaction and community awareness is a part of growing up.

Delivering better care and support for young people with a disability and their families is one of the Bligh government's top priorities. That is what this initiative is all about. It is great to see so many young people making a life for themselves. We are working in partnership with non-government organisations across Queensland to support more young Queenslanders with a disability. I congratulate the minister in particular for her commitment and devotion to this cause.

### **Transport Planning**

**Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (11.50 am): Where is the integrated regional transport planning which is supposed to be focusing and strategically driving how \$7 billion worth of taxpayers' money this year is spent on transport and roads in Queensland? It does not exist. For South-East Queensland, where the bulk of this money is being expended, the plan to integrate the road transport network is about three years out of date. The new one is still in multiple draft forms. It is being wheeled in and out of cabinet and has recommendations from the department for additional road user charges

such as the controversial 15c- to 30c-per-kilometre congestion charge. This proposal went to cabinet only two weeks ago. The government claims, like it did with the petrol tax, that it will not happen under its watch. We have heard that before. I call on the transport minister to release this plan.

This government has no coordinated plans on how to spend money wisely. It has lots of plans on how to raise money but no eye for value and just excuses for cost blow-outs and disappearing delivery time frames in SEQIPP, the infrastructure plan. The only expertise this Labor government has is in price gouging motorists and ordinary Queenslanders to pay for this government's mismanagement.

The hike in the Gateway Motorway and Logan Motorway tolls is the latest. It will add \$30 to \$40 per week to a commuter's average costs. This comes on top of the government's broken promise on the petrol tax, Australia's highest vehicle registration costs and the dishonest asset sales. That is not planning for a sustainable Queensland; that is a desperate, shonky and tired Labor government.

A livable and sustainable Queensland requires more than just vision statements from government; it requires strategic, cost-effective and well-executed actions. This state Labor government will trumpet how billions of dollars have been spent on transport and main roads in the last few years, but it has done it without a current integrated regional transport strategy let alone properly costed and planned projects. This is a crying waste of taxpayers' money.

The last plan expired years ago. It was the subject of great criticism by the Auditor-General because it lapsed and there was a lack of coordination in government. The new strategy for South-East Queensland, Connecting SEQ 2031, has been leaking from the public sector because it does include new road user charges and costs for Queenslanders.

Let us look at other plans that are out of date. The TransLink network plan is at least two years out of date. That is about the services that run on the infrastructure. It is out of date; it has expired. The majority of the road and public transport projects in SEQIPP, which is supposed to be the master planning document for rolling out infrastructure, have never been subject to even a preliminary cost evaluation let alone a business case—nor have they been developed as part of a truly integrated transport system.

This government is pouring money like water into a bucket that has a hole in it. In fact, there are many holes in Anna's bucket. The holes are from a lack of proper strategic planning, scoping of projects and competency in delivery. Taxpayers are paying for this. What does this mean?

Let us look at some of the cost blow-outs that have put a hole in the other projects that require funding. The Ipswich Motorway upgrade blew out by \$800 million. The western corridor recycled water pipeline also blew out by \$800 million. That is \$1,600 million for those two projects. That is a lot of money. That is equivalent to paving and sealing over 8,000 kilometres of rural roads. That is more than double the distance between Adelaide to Cairns via Melbourne or nearly double the distance between Brisbane and Perth. It is about double two Northern Busways at a cost of \$735 million each. It is nearly two Gold Coast Rapid Transits at a cost of \$949 million. It is more than ample funding for the Robina-Varsity Lakes rail, which was costed at \$300 million, and the Springfield line, which will currently cost \$386 million.

This government has no plan to connect population growth and the road and public transport infrastructure that is required to sustain that growth. What we have seen is a blatant hot air balloon of planning. When we look at it we see that it is full of promises and lacks substance or a gritty evaluation to provide a well-costed, scoped and planned pathway to sustainable growth. When we see these sorts of cost blow-outs we see a mark of lousy planning. Other worthy projects are quietly rolled back without fanfare. This is what is happening across government.

I want to turn to another important issue. That is the issue of public servants facing forced relocation to the transport minister's electorate. It is about forced relocations and not about what is in the best interests of service delivery and addressing some of the fundamental issues in the public sector.

*(Time expired)*

## World Water Day

**Ms O'NEILL** (Kallangur—ALP) (11.55 am): International World Water Day is held annually on 22 March as a means of focusing attention on the importance of fresh water and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. This year United Nations Water is dedicating World Water Day to the theme of water quality, reflecting its importance alongside quantity, in water management. The campaign is designed to raise awareness of sustaining healthy ecosystems and human wellbeing through addressing the increasing water-quality challenges in water management and to raise the profile of water quality by encouraging governments, organisations, communities and individuals around the world to actively engage in proactively addressing water quality—for example, in pollution prevention, clean-up and restoration, and innovative solutions to reduce threats on water quality.



In previous years water scarcity has been the focus, highlighting the increasing significance of water scarcity worldwide and the need for increased integration and cooperation to ensure sustainable, efficient and equitable management of scarce water resources, both at international and local levels. We are so lucky to live in Australia, particularly Queensland, where we have clean drinking water and reliable supplies for domestic, recreational and industrial use.

We are so used to our access to water that we no longer recognise just what a luxury it is to have clean water running from our taps and how few other citizens of the world enjoy that luxury. A huge proportion of the world's population does not have access to either running or potable water and suffers the disease and poor health propagated by that poor water quality. Some 1.1 billion people have no access to improved water supply and 2.4 billion will be without basic sanitation by 2015.

Our government has faced the challenge of both water quality and supply, and I am proud of the planning and investment that protects both into the future. We are on the driest continent on earth and we have moved to protect future supplies and quality. We have the South East Queensland Water Strategy, which sets out the means to ensure a secure water supply over the next 50 years, to support our lifestyles and to provide for our water use needs as well as the needs of the environment. The strategy includes a water supply guarantee, which is to be met by a range of supply infrastructure, such as dams, desalination, purified recycled water, and a grid linking them up, as well as an ongoing demand management program.

The South-East Queensland water grid is a region-wide, long-term water supply scheme that provides a sustainable water infrastructure network for the South-East Queensland region. The project was the largest urban response to the drought in Australia, which was severely affecting water supplies in Brisbane and its surrounds. The basic component of the project is a 450-kilometre network of two-way pipelines that will connect areas that have an oversupply of water to those areas lacking water, facilitating water sharing across the South-East Queensland region.

There are also major protections in place for water quality. As announced by Minister Robertson at a recent water conference, South-East Queenslanders will, for the first time, receive regular reports on the quality of their bulk drinking water under a Queensland government initiative. When South-East Queenslanders turn on their taps, they want to have confidence that their water not only looks clean and clear but also is healthy and safe to drink. These reports will provide South-East Queenslanders with clear information on water quality management.

The chair of the National Health and Medical Research Council's Water Quality Advisory Committee, Don Bursill, said the initiative kept South-East Queensland at the forefront of water quality management around the world. The report covers the period between June 2009 and January this year and shows that bulk drinking water in South-East Queensland complies with the National Health and Medical Research Council's Australian drinking water guidelines of 2004 and showed that more than 8,300 individual water tests were carried out on bulk drinking water.

We also have the South East Queensland Healthy Waterways Partnership, a government-community collaboration committed to improving the health of catchments and rivers in South-East Queensland. Funded through the Department of Environment and Resource Management, the partnership coordinates the efforts of over 70 partners including local councils, researchers, educators, and numerous industry and community contributors. The Department of Environment and Resource Management is managing the Queensland government's \$20 million investment in the strategy's actions to reduce water pollution and restore degraded waterways. Preventing water contamination is typically cheaper than cleaning up after a contamination.

There is a huge database of information available from government websites to assist us all. I urge everyone to look for tips that we can all utilise, from protecting our watercourses to not littering and cleaning up after our pets. We can be proud of our initiatives to protect and provide clean water to every home, but just as importantly in the week where World Water Day is celebrated we should be thankful—thankful that we are so used to clean running water in our houses that we no longer even consider it a luxury, that instead of treating it with respect we have to be reminded that water is a precious resource and not to waste it by forced water restrictions. We should also take some time this week to imagine the lives of some of our neighbours and their struggles to access this really basic necessity.

### Office for Seniors

**Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—LNP) (12.00 pm): I do not come into this House presuming the needs and desires of a newborn baby are the same as those of a 30-year-old—that those two people share the same quality of life, concerns or daily stresses. Such a presumption would be ridiculous and insulting to all peoples in that age group, their needs, their desires and their realities. So it is with disappointment and sadness that I sit here every time I hear the minister stand in this House and talk about the wonderful things she is doing for seniors. Discussion papers and talkfests are not improving the quality of life for our older Queenslanders. There is no quick fix for simultaneously resolving the issues of a frail, isolated older person who relies on community services for their independence in their own home or a baby boomer who is in the last years of their self-employment looking forward to retirement and family

plans. The range of needs, of abilities, of experiences, of concerns among this age group is never going to be sufficiently addressed in a discussion paper which will then sit on the minister's desk marked 'Job done'. We need more than talking. We need more than a name on an office door.

There is no Office for Seniors in this state, regardless of whatever terminology the minister likes to use. There is no government office that advocates and lobbies for the interests of seniors to improve transport, health, employment, volunteering and family issues. There is no Office for Seniors in this state that our seniors can confidently say pays recognition to their efforts and contributions and assists them as their voice in government and the community. The contributions of seniors, whether they are baby boomers or 90 years old, enhance our community beyond value through their roles as volunteers or employers, community leaders or carers, grandparents or generational advocates. Baby boomers and other seniors have built this state and paid their taxes all their working lives and deserve better than this government is giving them.

There are a number of non-government organisations that do a wonderful job in raising the profile of seniors. But after years and years of dedication and work, they are still not recognised by this government and still have to undertake the fight daily to have seniors' issues recognised in this state and, sadly, in this House. We need an Office for Seniors to ensure the best possible quality of life in this state for the seniors of today and the seniors of tomorrow. It has been a fact of life for years that our community is ageing. It has not come as a surprise to our community, but our government seems to have just woken up to the fact that 40 per cent of the constituency is now in the group that is termed 'seniors'. The government has been caught unprepared and, even worse, it is doing very little—it is doing nothing—to prepare for the future either. The time for patronising words from this minister has passed.

On behalf of the LNP, I offer my promise to seniors across the state that I will continue to advocate for an office of seniors—an office of seniors that is committed to looking at employment, health, the cost of living, the quality of living, transport, community involvement and a raft of other issues from a specifically seniors' point of view. I offer this promise to those who are aged 80, those in their 60s and 70s and those who are nearing their 50th birthday. I vow never to presume that because they all or soon will fall under the heading of 'seniors' their vast range of needs and concerns can be confused and collated into one simple list of 'one size fits all' condescending dot points, and that is what this government is currently doing—putting all seniors into 'one size fits all' condescending dot points—because we are looking at a span of 30 years or more across all of our senior groups.

Until we as a community offer our seniors the best possible opportunities for engagement, we will not derive the benefits of their experience and their contribution. All of our seniors have made our state what it is today, and their active participation in our community will continue to enrich our society. We need to ensure that participation is encouraged and enabled. There is no stereotype that can be applied to seniors as a group or even to the different age groups that make up the group. What this government has failed to recognise yet again is that a label does not diminish the individual standing behind that name. Behind the label are hundreds of thousands of lives and personalities and dreams and wishes, each one deserving of attention. Behind the label are lifetimes of contributions and works thoroughly worthy of recognition and appreciation.

*(Time expired)*

## Carers

**Mrs ATTWOOD** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (12.05 pm): The Bligh government is committed to supporting carers because it values the contribution carers make not only to the lives of people they care for but the community in general. The Queensland government formally recognised the significant contribution of carers with the enactment of the Carers (Recognition) Act 2008. The act recognises the support and care more than half a million Queenslanders give on a daily basis to family members, loved ones, friends and neighbours who may have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness or frailty. As the local member for Mount Ommaney and parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Disability Services, I acknowledge the part played by carers and the immense benefits their unpaid efforts bring to our community.

The act, which came into effect on 4 May 2009, includes a Queensland carers charter and provides for the appointment of the Queensland Carers Advisory Council to give carers a voice on issues that affect them. Last Thursday, on behalf of the Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, I attended the second meeting of the Queensland Carers Advisory Council. The council focused its attention on key issues of concern, including building the capacity of carers and their access to information, the challenges faced by older and younger carers, carer participation in education and employment, and services and supports for carers. Council members also provided valuable advice that will help promote awareness of compliance by public authorities, including government departments, with the Queensland carers charter. Under the Carers (Recognition) Act 2008, public authorities are required to reflect the charter's principles when providing services that impact on carers and the persons for whom they care.

As members can see, the Carers Advisory Council has a key role in improving services for carers across the state. It will now turn its attention to developing a plan of action for the period up to 30 June 2014. Council members were selected on the basis of their awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by carers and their strong community networks. There is an incredible wealth of knowledge and experience between the members of the council, and I am confident that they will be excellent advocates for the carers of Queensland. I am also confident that the council's contribution, together with other initiatives, will make Queensland a better place not only for carers but for the community in general.

It was great to be able to talk to and hear the views of council members firsthand. They include people such as Deputy Chair Toni Dunshea, who has been a carer and advocate for the rights of carers and people with a disability for the last 30 years; Merle Edwards, who has been a carer for 47 years involved in the establishment of education, employment, accommodation and respite services in the community for people with a disability; Carolyn McDiarmid, who has been a carer for three generations of family members and who has considerable knowledge about balancing carer responsibilities with employment; Debra Cottrell from Carers Queensland, the peak carers body in Queensland which offers services and support to Queensland's unpaid carers; Kathryn Treston from Mamre, which supports families to plan and build rich, meaningful and inclusive lives for their family member with a disability; and Majorie Bloor from ARAFMI, which provides support services for families caring for people with a mental health issue and/or psychiatric disability. There are also four government representatives who have been selected from departments that play a significant and positive role in the provision of carer services in Queensland. They are Patrea Walton from the Department of Education and Training; Professor Andrew Wilson, the Deputy Director-General of Queensland Health; Phil Clarke from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General; and Michael Hogan, the Deputy Director-General of the Department of Communities and chair of the council.

I commend council members for their passion and enthusiasm and for their valuable contribution to advancing the interests of carers and I look forward to working with them all for some time to come. Finally, I take the opportunity to acknowledge the Australian government for its introduction of the Carer Recognition Bill 2010. This bill represents a significant effort to enshrine into law the Australian government's national recognition of the exceptional contributions made by carers across the country.

## Education

**Dr FLEGG** (Moggill—LNP) (12.10 pm): I am glad to have this opportunity to speak about the LNP's response to the government's green paper on education, titled *A flying start for Queensland children*. When Professor Geoff Masters released his report, I released the LNP's response—I might say long before the government released its response. From the minister's statements in the House this morning, it seems that he spends an awful lot of time googling LNP websites looking for ideas. A very good idea for the minister might be for him to improve his googling technique, because I posted the LNP's response to the Geoff Masters report on the LNP website—on the home page to make it easy for the minister to find—and it still does not appear that he was able to find it.

I am pleased to make this response here today, because it is important that the LNP makes such a response. I note that in the Queensland Teachers Union's response to the green paper it said that there is a long history of organisational reforms in education that have served little purpose other than to demonstrate that a particular government is 'doing something' about education. That is one of my concerns about the government's green paper. We saw it with the prep year—an idea that we supported but it lost some of its benefit through excessive class sizes and the absence of full-time teacher aides. It is all right to have the idea but the execution has to be delivered properly.

The LNP is deeply committed to Queensland providing the world's best in the area of education. What could be more important? Furthermore, the LNP is willing to support positive initiatives from the government. Although the government is generally not willing to consider ideas put forward by the LNP, as we have seen in a number of areas, the offer stands to support the government, where possible, on good ideas in education. The government's green paper deals with the issue of reading. I think there is some \$8 million for that, most of which looks to me like it is to be spent on advertising. It is referred to by the Queensland Teachers Union as reform on the cheap. I think the last time we heard somebody advocating reading to children it was Mark Latham. So this issue is recycled Mark Latham. Obviously, the LNP supports the principle of reading, but if using volunteers in schools is not based on an initiative from that school and from individual teachers, I can tell members now that it will not be successful.

The most contentious area of the paper is the move of year 7—40,000 state school students are to be moved into high schools in response to the national curriculum. In this discussion paper—so-called—it is actually a fait accompli. It is a very high-risk strategy. The government talks about building and capital expenditure of \$300 million. That appears to me, and others, to be inadequate. The physical environment of schools is very important and those 40,000 state school students are going to need classrooms, music rooms, science labs and the like.

But even more important is the quality of the education—the specialist high school teachers to deliver it and the intensive support. There is no mention even of recurrent expenditure or of the numbers of extra high school teachers who will be needed. In Queensland, children in that year are much younger than their counterparts. I notice that the government is trying a bit of sleight of hand on this issue. They will still be younger on entering high school in Queensland than children in the other states. Although the *Gold Coast Bulletin* misquoted me, saying that I was calling for a test, I support the principle of parents and teachers assessing children for their readiness to enter high school at this young age. I note that the Queensland Teachers Union made a similar call.

No mention is made in this paper about middle schooling. No mention is made in this paper about the assistance that will be available to the private sector, which will suffer a decline in enrolment in their primary schools and increases in enrolment in their secondary schools. This is a very complex and costly area. I will post our response shortly on my website and the LNP's website. I hope the minister can find it.

### Green and Healthy Queensland

**Ms FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (12.15 pm): The Bligh Labor government is committed to a green and healthy Queensland. I have spoken numerous times in this House about the many ways in which this commitment is being rolled out in the Bulimba electorate—ranging from the exciting partnerships with local businesses to achieve water and energy efficiencies, to the take-up of the government's ClimateSmart Home Service, to the rollout of the Find your 30 and the Go for 2 and 5 campaigns to encourage healthy and active living and, of course, to the encouragement that the government is offering to local residents to forgo their car when they travel to and from work and to take up public or active transport options instead.

Members will know of the government's excellent TravelSmart program, which encourages households to consider sustainable travel options. The \$22.6 million program recognises that, although it is important for the government to continue its actions to encourage sustainable growth, individuals can also make changes that can make a big difference. Households in the Bulimba electorate have been given the opportunity to do just that and have participated with great enthusiasm since the program was introduced in the area at the end of last year. By the end of the TravelSmart program in 2011, 180,000 households in Brisbane's south and in Ipswich, 72,000 households on the Gold Coast and 72,000 households on the Sunshine Coast and Caboolture will also have received the invitation to participate in the TravelSmart program. By that stage the government hopes to see a level of household participation in the program that contributes to a 10 per cent reduction in private vehicle use on our region's roads and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of over 100,000 tonnes.

Although we know that this program effects excellent outcomes, there is only so much that we can encourage individuals to do if we are not at the same time providing the infrastructure to support their intentions and actions. That is why initiatives such as the government's Cycle Network Program are so important. This program was established in 2006 when the Queensland government allocated \$556 million to be distributed over 20 years to develop an SEQ regional cycle network. The main objective is to develop facilities that will encourage more sustainable transport modes, such as cycling, walking and the use of public transport. I am pleased to see that these funds have been allocated to significant projects in the Bulimba electorate.

As part of the massive Gateway Upgrade Project, Queensland Motorways Ltd, in liaison with the Department of Transport and Main Roads, is delivering a shared 4.5-metre pedestrian and cycle facility on the duplicate Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge. An amount of \$12 million has been allocated for the cycleway on the Gateway in this financial year, with a \$35 million total allocation across the life of the project. This shared facility, which is being delivered and is scheduled to be operational this year, will start at Lytton Road on the southern side of the Brisbane River, ending on the northern side at Kingsford Smith Drive. The state government has committed capital grants from the Cycle Network Program to the Brisbane City Council to deliver additional bikeway connections to the south of the Gateway Upgrade Project. Capital grants for 2009-10 include \$650,000 to deliver a bikeway connecting Lytton Road to the Murarrie Recreation Reserve via Creek Road and Garret Street past Murrarie State School, then following Railway Terrace; \$550,000 for an off-road bike path along Lytton Road from Creek Road to Junction Road; and \$110,000 to develop on-road cycle lanes across Queensport Road south between Lytton Road and the Murarrie Recreation Reserve. The government is continuing to work with the Brisbane City Council, QML and key stakeholders to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach to delivering bikeway connectivity to the southern side of the Brisbane River.

The cycle network and the TravelSmart programs encompass a suite of other initiatives to encourage individuals to make healthy and sustainable travel and sustainable travel choices. A recent and prominent example of those initiatives is the government's role as principal sponsor for Bike Week last week. Bike Week is Queensland's major celebration of all things cycling—whether that be for sport, recreation or fun—and was very ably facilitated by the enthusiastic Bicycle Queensland, with \$49,000 in financial support provided by the Queensland government. This amount was in addition to the funding

that was provided by the Premier for her Premier's Bike Week Challenge, which offered 50 bikes to Queensland's students from years 5 to 7. Then there was Ride to Work Day. It was excellent to be part of a team of MPs from both sides of this House, led by the Premier and the Minister for Transport, who cycled up to King George Square to show their support for an important lifestyle choice.

Community initiatives cannot be truly successful without the support of local advocates and in this regard I particularly acknowledge the efforts and passion of people in my local community such as Chris Donnelly from Bicycle Riders and members of the East Bicycle Users Group, Rolf Kuelsen, Heather Horne and Peter Berkeley and also Susan Thompson and Mel Berkeley, all of whom are not only committed to promoting cycling but also have given me much personal support in championing the cause of active transport. I confirm my personal commitment to this important policy area and look forward to seeing many more permutations of the government's current initiatives around it.

### **Kingaroy, Underground Coal Gasification Project**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (12.20 pm): Last Thursday I attended a meeting of the Kingaroy Concerned Residents Group held to discuss Cougar Energy's underground coal gasification project in Kingaroy. Approximately 80 residents attended the meeting and many questions were raised. Concerns were raised about the lack of independent information provided. I believe Cougar Energy explained quite well the pros and cons of the project and the process that will occur. That information is seen as being tainted by an industry bias and therefore people have many concerns and are prepared to raise them and raise them quite loudly.

Present at that meeting were not only concerned farmers and local residents but also Toby Hutcheon from the Queensland Conservation Council. He put forward the council's opposition to any kind of mining in Queensland, instead advocating for alternative energy sources such as wind and solar. His purpose for being there was to outline the risk of underground coal gasification to the region, the people and the underground water resources. Larissa Waters, an environmental lawyer and Senate candidate for the Queensland Greens, was also present. As this is a federal election year, we know full well that any opportunity to get a little air time will be taken by any candidate. She spoke about the grounds on which people could oppose this project and whether or not compensation would be paid if the water was polluted.

There was no positive alternative independent view put forward; it was either opposition or nothing. That caused me concern. It is my understanding that people who have concerns are not necessarily opposed to this project; they just want independent information. I ask the minister to release any independent information that she may have in regard to this particular project. The concerns are primarily around contamination of groundwater and land. There have been other pilot projects but nobody can find any ongoing projects. They have all been pilot projects that have not progressed or there have been negative reports with regard to them. When one hunts for information it is difficult to find anything but negativity.

I have two reports which I seek leave to table. One is to do with the US EPA. It is quite frightening. One section refers to potential and documented damages to US DWS, which is underground sources of drinking water. It is strongly of the opinion that there is a real and genuine risk and people need to be very concerned about the whole project. It goes on to outline other projects. If there is information that the minister has that would rebut this we would be more than happy to read it.

*Tabled paper:* Documents including a copy of the United States Environmental Protection Agency report dated September 1999 titled 'The Class V Underground Injection Control Study, Volume 13, In-situ Fossil Fuel Recovery Wells' and a memorandum dated 1 March 2010 to Mrs Dorothy Pratt from Dr R Boothroyd regarding underground coal gasification [1932].

Cougar's trial pilot is right next to Kingaroy. I can see the pilot flame at night from my house. It is very close. The prevailing winds are from that direction. People are rightly and justifiably concerned. This is prime, A1 agricultural land that needs to be preserved. We do not have a lot of it. We do have a lot of coal elsewhere. The coal involved in this project is second-rate coal. It is coal that the mining companies do not want to bring out because it is not worth their while. I would appreciate any information from the government on why it has deemed it reasonable to put the pilot project so close to the township of Kingaroy. We will fight this if we need to. If it is okay we will support it. We do not want it used as a political tool. We want it based on right and proper independent information.

### **Go Card**

**Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (12.25 pm): I rise to inform the House of some important developments in the area of public transport for Queenslanders and the people of the Morayfield state electorate. The Bligh Labor government is investing in public transport service provision and infrastructure whilst continuing the rollout of the go card ticketing system. The go card provides many benefits to consumers and public transport planners. I have been a go card user for a number of years. My family, my friends and I continue to enjoy the benefits of go card and are strong advocates for its place in our public transport network. The go card is quicker than the paper ticket equivalent because with the go card it is not necessary to queue for a ticket. The go card is great value because it is 30 per

cent cheaper than the equivalent single trip paper ticket price. Moreover, frequent use discounts of a further 50 per cent apply if go card users use their go card more than 10 times a week. In addition, go card users get a 10 per cent discount on all trips in off-peak travel periods.

The go card is convenient because there is no need to buy separate tickets for different trips and it can be used on buses, ferries and trains. If a person chooses to register their go card then they can also top it up online and check their journey details. The go card is easy to use. People need to simply touch on at the beginning of their journey and touch off at the end. The trip fare is automatically deducted from the card balance. The go card is smarter because it uses the latest technology to calculate the cheapest trip cost for an individual's entire journey, including up to three transfers and irrespective of the distance travelled or the type of transport used.

The go card is reusable and it is easy to top up the credit balance. The credit balance does not expire and users can choose how much money they want to put on their go card. The go card is safe and secure because after registration the go card can be locked down to protect the credit balance if the go card is stolen or lost. It is important to emphasise to users of the go card that they must always touch on at the card reader at the beginning of their journey and touch off at the card reader at the end of their journey. Failure to do this may mean that the user may be travelling without a valid ticket or will be charged a fixed fare amount for the journey.

The House will be interested to hear that the number of retail outlets for the go card continues to increase. Go cards can be purchased by a variety of means including online, at selected shop retailers, at selected train stations, by calling the TransLink hotline or by post. A new public transport fare structure commenced on 4 January 2010. The restructure will encourage greater use of the go card, will fund more public transport services in South-East Queensland and will redress the current taxpayer funded fare imbalance. This is the first fare restructure since 2008. Usually, fares change each year. As already highlighted, the go card has many benefits: it is quicker, easier, safer and more efficient. It also provides public transport planners with important patronage demand and use information. Further, go card fares are significantly cheaper than the equivalent paper ticket fare.

Residents of the Morayfield state electorate are already seeing an increased investment in public transport infrastructure and services by the Bligh Labor government. In fact, I am very pleased to see that the Bligh Labor government is delivering on our election commitment to provide more car parking spaces at Burpengary train station and Morayfield train station. The additional car parking will encourage more people onto public transport, will reduce pressure on car parking infrastructure in neighbouring areas and will reduce car parking congestion on local roads. Burpengary station will benefit from an extension of the existing car park on the western side of the train line, providing approximately 90 new spaces, as well as upgrades to lighting and closed-circuit television systems.

When the car parking works are complete, Burpengary train station will have over 500 parking spaces for commuters. Meanwhile, the Morayfield train station will have extended its existing car parks on both sides of the line to gain approximately 90 more parking spaces. Construction at Burpengary and Morayfield train stations is expected to be completed this financial year. I look forward to continuing to work with the Bligh Labor government to deliver a greater investment in public transport service provision and infrastructure for the people of the Morayfield state electorate.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Before I close matters of public interest, the member for Nanango indicated that she would seek leave to table certain documents. She has tabled the documents without leave being sought. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

## LAND TAX BILL

### First Reading

**Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development) (12.30 pm): I present a bill for an act about land tax and for related purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

*Tabled paper:* Land Tax Bill [1933].

*Tabled paper:* Land Tax Bill, explanatory notes [1934].

## Second Reading

**Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development) (12.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Land Tax Act was enacted in 1915 and many of the core substantive and exemption provisions have been in the legislation from the outset. In the almost 100 years since then, there have been numerous amendments in response to various changes in policy and commercial practices. Today the legislation reflects outdated drafting practices.

As part of the Office of State Revenue's ongoing program of legislation modernisation, stage 1 of modernising land tax legislation occurred last year when the standard administration provisions of the Taxation Administration Act 2001 were extended to land tax. This bill completes modernisation by repealing the Land Tax Act 1915 and replacing it with modern legislation drafted in plain English and restructured to simplify the provisions.

The bill retains the existing land tax base, policy and tax rates. This is a rewrite of the existing law and practice only. Consistent with longstanding arrangements, land tax will continue to be based on the value of land determined under the Valuation of Land Act 1944.

A number of beneficial changes are being incorporated in the bill. Capping arrangements which applied for three financial years ending 2009-10 are being extended for 2010-11. Under these arrangements, the value on which land tax is levied is limited to 150 per cent of the value which applied for the previous year. A new extended payment option will be available from 2010-11 onwards, as announced in the 2009-10 state budget. Taxpayers will have the option of paying land tax by either a single payment within 90 days of assessment issue or three equal instalments within 45, 90 and 150 days of assessment issue.

The current land tax legislation contains an outdated anti-avoidance provision. As part of the modernisation process, this bill includes a new general anti-avoidance provision modelled on contemporary provisions in other state and Commonwealth taxation legislation, including the Duties Act 2001. This will provide greater certainty about the types of avoidance schemes targeted by the provision.

The Duties Act 2001, the Payroll Tax Act 1971 and the Land Tax Act 1915 each contain similar provisions providing tax exemptions for charitable institutions in certain circumstances. This bill simplifies these provisions by moving to the Taxation Administration Act 2001 the provisions about which institutions qualify for exemption. This will provide a single registration which will reduce red tape for these institutions. The bill also includes consequential amendments to the Duties Act 2001 and the Payroll Tax Act 1971 reflecting this change. Other conditions relating to these exemptions will remain in the relevant revenue statute.

A number of significant drafting changes in the bill will make the law clearer and easier for taxpayers to understand. This will make the law more certain, assisting both compliance and administration. For example, the current law makes a distinction between exemptions and deductions, both of which have the effect of ensuring land tax is not imposed on the relevant property. The bill eliminates the distinction and replaces it with a concept of exempt land. In addition, all exemptions are located in one part of the bill.

The bill also makes a number of consequential amendments to other acts to reflect the repeal of the Land Tax Act 1915 and its replacement by this bill, when enacted. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Nicholls, adjourned.

## REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from 9 March (see p. 660), on motion of Mr Fraser—

That the bill be now read a second time.

**Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (12.34 pm): Last night I read through the legislation and, while contemplating it, I had an unnerving experience. One is almost reminded of the old joke that begins 'I was on my way to the Colosseum'. At about 8.15 or 8.30 last night I jumped into the lift on level 9 and, obviously prying around to see what he could get into, I saw the Treasurer, as well as the Under Treasurer, Mr Bradley, and a host of other Treasury advisers.

**Mr Finn:** They were trying to find the birthday party.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** They had been up for a birthday party, exactly. As I walked in, the Treasurer said, 'Well, this is weird.' I have to say that it was one of those rare occasions when I did very much agree with him. More than anything else, I wondered where they were coming from. I did wonder if I had the opportunity to ask some questions about budget planning being undertaken or whether there was some other cunning plan going on. I will reveal the secrets of the lift at a later time.

This bill is an omnibus bill dealing with 11 statutes in total. It amends six revenue statutes and five other statutes primarily dealing with the asset sales process. It comes in two sections. When the bill is passed, much of the work undertaken under its auspices will 'protect the revenue', as the old saying goes. That is, it will protect revenue collection. I make it clear that the LNP supports the proper payment of taxes by all taxpayers. If everyone pays their fair share, no-one has to pay more than they otherwise ought to.

It enshrines in legislation administrative rulings that have been in place for some considerable time. I guess as we go through the question will have to be asked: why have the administrative rulings that have been made by executive fiat by the commissioner of revenue taken so long to find their way into legislation? Is there a reason or is it simply a matter of convenience to bring them all under one piece of legislation? The bill will streamline debt collection practices across the various revenue acts by bringing them under a single taxation act—that is, the Taxation Administration Act, which was amended only in the last 12 months—and makes consequential changes to facilitate all of those.

The second purpose of the legislation is to make transitional arrangements to facilitate the asset sales process. Essentially those changes will facilitate the continuation of the superannuation arrangements of employees who are employed by those assets that are being sold so that they will be able to continue in the QSuper scheme, as I understand it. It will also cover some other employees should there be any changes in their employment arrangements. Predominantly, it looks after people who will be employed by private enterprise after the asset sales.

The bill also amends the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act. That is the bill which became an act at four o'clock in the morning of the week in which we debated the budget and which put in place the powers to facilitate the government's privatisation agenda. These amendments are another attempt to perpetrate a con on the people of Queensland. This follows the statement made in December last year by the Premier and the Treasurer that this is a privatisation that does not really involve selling everything off because we are only giving a 99-year lease, so the right to toll on the Gateway and Logan motorways will only be a 99-year lease and the state of Queensland will still own the underlying asset.

It is the same with Forestry Plantations Queensland, where the statement was made that what is being sold is only the right to gather the timber as opposed to the underlying land, and similarly with Queensland Rail. That is really a furphy. As anyone would know if they had observed the privatisation of assets, a 99-year lease is as good as giving away the farm, which is what is occurring here. We only need to look at the operators of Brisbane Airport to understand that is the case. That land is still owned by the Commonwealth, but the business and everything that occurs on it, including the development and the borrowings that fund that development, is based on a leasehold of that property. So the LNP will be opposing this section of the bill in relation to the changes to the Property Law Act that facilitate the sale and disposal of the assets by lease rather than by, if you like, the freehold transfer of the whole undertaking and ownership.

This sale process has been a rushed process. It was rushed when it was brought to the budget in 2009. It was done without the consent of the voters of Queensland. In fact, it was done almost to spite the voters of Queensland and particularly, so far as the sale of Queensland Rail is concerned, there are sufficient concerns about the model being proposed by the government to oppose it in terms of its long-term economic benefit to the people of Queensland. In that respect, I note we are in good company. The federal Minister for Resources and Energy, Martin Ferguson, not once but twice last week indicated that the federal government has very real concerns with the proposed manner of the disposal of Queensland Rail—if you like, the single model, the one big company model that is being proposed by the government, selling the above the rail assets and the below the rail assets in order to create a big entity so that there is a monument to the Premier and this government. They will create a huge entity that is not in any way as efficient as it might otherwise be and it will be to the detriment of future generations of Queenslanders who would rely on a efficient rail network system rather than just a big company running a rail system.

Yesterday we found that the federal infrastructure minister, Anthony Albanese, also indicated, as reported in today's *Australian Financial Review*, the concerns that the federal government has about the proposed model being sold. In fact, he went so far as to say that he would have no problems with the Australian Rail Track Corporation being involved in any offer or proposal that miners or groups of miners might be prepared to make to the government in order to, if you like, put an alternative process in place. So there are very real concerns held by the federal government and many others in industry and those with experience in privatisations about the model that is being proposed. Not only is the privatisation bad and we oppose the government's privatisation process; we also oppose this model that it is going with because of the lack of clarity in the way it is being done.



The bill also introduces two changes to revenue and grant legislation. The bill reduces the cap on the First Home Owner Grant Scheme. The value at which the First Home Owner Grant Scheme cuts out has now been reduced from \$1 million to \$750,000. I am probably of the view that there is not a great many people who would be accessing the First Home Owner Grant Scheme in the \$750,000 to \$1 million range. Unfortunately, we have been unable to organise a briefing at this stage, so this is a question that I would have otherwise asked at a briefing, but I put it out there for the Treasurer now to give an indication of the number of people in that range who would have accessed the First Home Owner Grant Scheme. I have to say that, if the policy purpose of the scheme is to get people to invest in their first home, it ought to be done non-discriminatorily.

I would expect that there would not be a great number of people who would be taking advantage of the grant over \$750,000. But there are people who may choose to save and buy their first home in an area where properties are quite expensive. Perhaps they are people who have not owned a house before but have managed to work their way through the system so that their first home would be over \$750,000. I think unnecessarily reducing the cut-off value from \$1 million to \$750,000 on the basis that other jurisdictions have done it seems to me to be somewhat capricious and somewhat envious.

The bill also makes a change to the Duties Act to provide relief from stamp duty to facilitate the restructure of stapled entities.

**Mr Fraser:** 'Top hatting'.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** An exemption will be available for so-called 'top-hatting' restructures of land rich corporations, listed public unit trusts and widely held public unit trusts. I am looking forward to the Treasurer demonstrating, with a graph, why it is called 'top hatting'—the interposition of another trust below the unit trusts and the investors. When you look at it in a diagram, it goes up and up and up; hence the term 'top hatting' on the way through. I have to say that in discussions with my colleagues the understanding of 'top hatting' was not high on the list of priorities. It was not necessarily on my list of priorities either. But the bill states that the requirements for the Commonwealth's capital gains tax rollover relief and other conditions must be met in order to qualify for the 'top-hatting' exemptions that apply.

The question that does come to mind is whether it would, for example, take effect on something like the BrisConnections structure, which is made up of stapled securities all the way through with various trustees. I think there are two trusts there that have stapled securities on them. So, given the restructuring that is being considered for BrisConnections and the take out of the small shareholders, we may see some form of 'top hatting' going on there or it may be that some other commercial arrangement is being considered in relation to the BrisConnections structure.

The bill makes a number of small changes to various acts. It effectively allows Suncorp to shift its head office to Sydney. In fact, Suncorp's registered office, I understand, is now in New South Wales; it is no longer in Queensland. When the merger of QIDC and Suncorp was put together preparatory to the Metway merger, there were some residency qualifications. A certain number of the directors of the merged entity had to reside in Queensland. That was effectively a way, if you like, of keeping the head office here. The market has changed and people's sophistication and understanding of the market has changed sufficiently so that we can accommodate this request by shareholders—which is effectively what it is—with a relative degree of maturity. The opposition has no problems with making that change to the residency qualifications. I note that there is still a requirement for the managing director to be ordinarily resident in Queensland. The question to the Treasurer is: what is he going to do if the managing director is not ordinarily resident in Queensland? How is he going to enforce that? Is he going to put an ankle tag on the managing director to make sure that he spends at least 50 per cent of his time north of the border?

The bill also provides finally for ratification of agreements with New Zealand to be done by subordinate legislation rather than by an act of parliament—that is, the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (Queensland) Act, another piece of legislation that is of vital daily import to the people of Queensland, even though they may not recognise it themselves. There are a number of changes that are being made by this fairly weighty tome. I will go through some of them now.

The Community Ambulance Cover Act is amended to clarify the exemption of the Commonwealth government from the community ambulance levy. It is obviously to reflect the constitutional arrangements that the state cannot tax the Commonwealth. It clarifies how that operates particularly in the flowthrough as it goes through shopping centres and other areas like that. It also clarifies the availability of refunds for cheques that are dishonoured or credit payments that are dishonoured. The cost of administering that scheme can be charged by the electricity companies against the total revenue that they would otherwise receive, which I think makes perfect sense.

The Duties Act is amended to provide for changes to the duties that are covered by the Duties Act, such as transfer duty, land rich duty and insurance duty. The bill makes a number of changes to this act. We have discussed the 'top hatting' of stapled securities. 'Top hatting' refers to the interposition of a

head trust between stapled entities and their existing security holders. Previously such an arrangement would attract transfer duty as it was a dutiable transaction. However, where the arrangement reflects a rollover or restructure of a number of related party trusts, where the unit holders or beneficial owners of the asset and their relationship with that asset have not changed—so effectively the ownership does not change; the same people are still the owners at the end of it; there is no transfer of the beneficial interest—an exemption to transfer duty will now apply. These changes stem from Commonwealth changes to allow a rollover exemption of capital gains tax for ‘top-hatting’ restructures.

On 25 September 2007, the then federal government introduced a new subdivision 124-Q in the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997, which took effect from 1 July 2006. That exemption provides rollover relief for CGT purposes when a unit trust is interposed between the existing holders of interests in stapled entities and those stapled entities. The interposed unit trust may be either a new trust or you may be able to slot one of the existing trusts above it in order to create that interposed entity. The main reason given at the time for this change was to help Australian listed property trusts—and this is pre-GFC, so this is when people still thought there were some opportunities to invest overseas and had the money to be able to do so, particularly in the case of property trusts—compete in overseas takeover bids. In a scrip bid for a United States real estate investment trust, an Australian stapled group would not be able to give full rollover relief to the existing investors in that real estate investment trust. Restructuring under a single trust solves that problem. This is all pretty complicated, I have to say. It is probably fairly rare as well, but nonetheless it is a good thing.

Another benefit is a significant saving in compliance costs such as auditing and financial reporting and management fees for responsible entities. Instead of having three or more of these responsible entities, you can bring them under one responsible entity. That can save hundreds of thousands of dollars for investors in those unit trusts.

Another benefit arising from the capacity to restructure—to be able to top hat—is to have a greater market for the investment units in those unit trusts. Although their nature is understood by sophisticated Australian investors who do not have a problem with them and the people who sell those interests who do not have a problem with them, some foreign investors find them difficult to understand and their reporting is not as simple as it might otherwise be. I cannot understand why people would find the stapled securities trust business at all difficult to understand, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am sure that little dissertation has made it abundantly clear to you how it is meant to work and to other members of the House.

The most significant benefit for most stapled groups is likely to relate to capital management. It is harder to manage the allocation of capital between a number of members of a stapled group than it is if there is a single head entity. Basically, one entity makes it easier to manage the capital structure. As I have said previously, the exemption is conditional on the restructure qualifying for capital gains tax rollover relief under the Commonwealth CGT provisions for top-hatting restructures.

**Mr Fraser:** We welcome your interposition.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I am always happy to interpose for the Treasurer and explain some things in the parliament for him.

The Queensland government, however, is late to provide this exemption because the New South Wales and Victorian governments provided the exemption in their 2008-09 budgets. We welcome it, but it could have been done earlier.

The next item I will move to is the collection of duty on life insurance riders. Life insurance riders are slight variations. I am sure that when you did law, Mr Deputy Speaker, it would have been life assurance. That was the old term for it. With the decline in standards and so on it is now called life insurance. There was one thing that was guaranteed, and that is that you were going to die so it was assured that you would get a payout. Life insurance riders also deal with disabilities or other events occurring. This legislation clarifies the position in terms of payment of duty on those insurance riders. People were taking out other insurance riders to go with their life assurance, and it was not necessarily clear that those policies were going to be subject to stamp duty in the state. We have now made some changes that clarify the requirement to pay stamp duty on life insurance riders.

There is also an allowance in the legislation to allow WorkCover an exemption of time to lodge its insurance duty statements and pay insurance duty for accident insurance. I noticed in the explanatory notes a claim is made that the time limit in the legislation is 14 days, but inevitably the commissioner allows 21 days for the lodgement of those duty statements and the payment of the insurance duty on them. I wonder why it is that the WorkCover operation has such difficulty in complying with the terms of its legislation that the requirement is often not met and that the commissioner, according to the explanatory notes, seems to be obliged to give extensions of time for WorkCover to comply with the legislation.

The amendments allow for refunds of transfer duty paid on certain transfers which are subsequently cancelled. If an agreement has been entered into but that agreement subsequently is not completed, the contract is cancelled or there has been some other form of expiration of the contract or the transfer, then the duty that might otherwise have been paid—because I think duties are required to be paid within 30 days of the document being executed—is able to be refunded.

The amendments exempt parties from the payment of transfer duty when they convert land from joint tenancy to tenants in common. They also extend the transfer duty exemption for managed investment schemes where there has been a transfer of ownership but no transfer in the beneficial ownership and the existing interests of the investors are still maintained. There are some other changes to ensure that there is consistency in the treatment of assessing duty when a property is transferred. The amendments expand the circumstances in which the commissioner may suspend or cancel a person's registration under the Duties Act as a self-assessor. At the moment self-assessors, predominantly solicitors and accountants, are registered and they—

**Mr Fraser:** Fine folk.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Exactly. They are exceptionally fine people.

**Mr Fraser:** Some of them make good members of parliament; others don't.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Do you have any examples? Mr Deputy Speaker, yes?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hoolihan): Order! The discussion between the two sides of the House should stop, and please direct your comments through the chair.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am sure that when the Treasurer was referring to the fine folk who are solicitors he had you in mind at some stage in the proceedings.

Self-assessors actually assess duty. In the old days they had to traipse up to the stamp duty office, lodge a document and collect it three days later after it had gone through the process, or take up a letter requesting that it be done urgently. It can now all be done in-house. The moneys are accounted for. I think on a monthly basis a return is lodged. The solicitors or the accountants hold that money in a specified account, usually a trust account, and they move it across to a suspense account and they remit that money. Unfortunately, there are those who do the wrong thing, and that is the case. Where the commissioner suspects on reasonable grounds that someone is doing the wrong thing, they have to move quickly to protect the revenue and the interests of those people who pay the duty. The payment of duty to the assessor does not obviate the payer of the responsibility to pay duty. If you pay it to the assessor and the assessor does the wrong thing and nicks off with it, or does something weird with it overseas or at the casino, you are still liable for duty. That was one of the matters we discussed the last time we amended some of this legislation. The commissioner now has rights to suspend that person's registration as soon as they might become aware of something that is going wrong with a particular self-assessor. I think that is a fair balance in terms of protecting the revenue and those people who pay duty. That aspect of it is being dealt with here.

There are some rights that accrue to the assessor to seek a review, but I guess it is the precautionary principle of saying, 'We will stop it now and we will investigate to make sure that nothing goes wrong,' rather than waiting to find that the money and the self-assessor have departed, and there is a whole lot of mess that has to be cleaned up by the various governing bodies and the commissioner, and also to find out that those people who have paid their duty in good faith to the assessor are out of pocket.

There are some other consequential changes about illegal or unauthorised endorsements, such as someone faking an endorsement on a document to indicate that duty has been paid. There are some changes to the transfer exemption for gifts of a home to a spouse or de facto partner, whether or not the home is subject to a mortgage. So we are clarifying that. If it was subject to a mortgage, it was not necessarily clear that the exemption would apply in those circumstances, although if it was not, you were exempt. There are a number of other changes in relation to the mechanism for the assessment of transfer duty and the way that duty is charged and calculated. It includes things like a provision that a transfer duty exemption on a change of trustee may apply even if the rights or interests of a beneficiary are altered, provided that duty has been paid on the alterations or they are exempt from duty. So if you have a change of trust you pay stamp duty on that. If you have a change of trustee if you have paid the duty on your change of trust, you do not have to pay it again when you change your trustee.

There we have, I guess, a brief summary of the changes that I understand are being made to a number of revenue bills before the House. I would like to go into a couple of other matters. I covered off my concerns on the first home owners grant—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Would now be a convenient time for you to break, member for Clayfield?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Sitting suspended from 12.59 pm to 2.30 pm.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Just before we broke for lunch I was discussing the changes that are being made to the revenue legislation. I was about to move to the first home owner grant, which I canvassed earlier in my speech. The bill reduces the cap on the value of homes for which the grant is payable from \$1 million to \$750,000. During the lunch break we received some further information from officers from the Office of State Revenue as part of a briefing. I understand that some further details will be provided to the Treasurer to provide to us in his summing-up of the second reading debate.

I note that the statistics available from the Office of State Revenue show that the number of grants paid in the last quarter of 2009, which is the latest figure available, has been steadily declining since the peak in the June quarter of 2009. I suspect that probably follows the reduction in the total amount of the grant payable from \$14,000 to \$7,000. There is also no doubt, in my view, that the first home owner grant boost that was introduced also had the effect of pulling forward a substantial number of investment decisions or purchase decisions made by buyers who were going to take up the \$14,000 grant before it expired because it was obvious that it was going to be for a limited time. I guess there were plenty of people who wished they were able to access the solar hot water scheme before it expired, somewhat prematurely as well.

Earlier, I mentioned the fact that there has been a decision to bring the cap down from a million dollars to \$750,000. There really has not been any substantial justification provided in the explanatory notes to the bill for that cap being reduced from \$1 million to \$750,000. There is not a terribly large number of people in that range, as I indicated. I think the number is in the region of 240 to 250. The total value of it I am not aware of.

It is a puzzling decision to bring it back to that figure. The only excuse being provided is that it is the same in all the other states. I do not know that that is necessarily a great reason to do it. It could make a difference to people who live in my seat of Clayfield, where properties are much more expensive and desirable by virtue of the fact that they are close to the city. This may be the case in electorates such as Brisbane Central.

**Ms Jones** interjected.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Even though the minister might find it hard to believe, in the electorate of Ashgrove there might be properties worth over \$1 million. The member for Ashgrove might like to consider whether people who want to buy their first home in her electorate can do so using the first home owner grant. There are a number of people who, for good reasons that the government really has no business asking about, might buy their first home which is worth over \$1 million. This removes the opportunity for them to access equitably and fairly the first home owner grant.

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): Order! The member for Clayfield has the call.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I thought that might get a response and it did from the old, cold, dead hand of the socialists up in the back corner. The former Attorney-General stuck his hand up. His great mate Erin Brockovich is now advertising Shine Lawyers around the place. He is good at pulling the rich down and redistributing the wealth. That is the good old Robin Hood model that she goes with. I thought that would get the response that it did from those up the back. According to the member for Toowoomba North, we shall not have success; we shall not have people striving to succeed and better themselves. When they do, what they will do is come along and try to rip it out of them. They will just take a little bit more—like they did with the Valuation of Land Act, the petrol levy and those sorts of things.

Although those opposite say that they want it to be equitable when everyone is paying the tax, they do not want it to be equitable when they are handing out the grants. So they will take from the rich and hand money out to all their special interest groups and their mates, but they will not allow those people who actually pay, contribute, strive and work to better themselves to enjoy any benefits whatsoever. That is the old politics of envy of the Labor Party coming to the fore yet again.

It is puzzling that the government has moved to do this. One can only assume that it is the good old left wing of the Labor Party who are sticking their hands up and saying, 'Comrades, we will not have this. We will take and we will take, but we will not give.'

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** As I said, the good old comrades of the Labor Party take and take. There would be plenty of people in the electorate of Mount Coot-tha who might be looking at buying properties worth over a million dollars. I am sure there are a few in that part of the world.

**Mr Fraser:** They're also interested in fairness.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Members should direct their comments through the chair.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I take the interjection from the Treasurer that they are also interested in fairness. That is exactly the point I am making. The fairness is that they pay and the fairness is that they are entitled to access the grant. According to the Treasurer, that is not the case because this legislation says that they can pay but they cannot access the grant because they have been successful or they might want to buy a property that is worth over \$1 million. That is the fairness that the Treasurer talks about. We just call it—and everyone knows it for what it is—the politics of envy.

The bill removes references to the intergovernmental agreement that was negotiated as part of the original GST framework when the GST was proposed to be introduced back in 1999. Those intergovernmental agreements include the time frames and the taxes that were to be abolished as a result of the GST. Those agreements have now been renegotiated with the Rudd government. Unsurprisingly, it has been decided that a number of those smaller taxes are going to be kept by the states for a longer period than was originally envisaged. In Queensland, the duty payable on the transfer of business assets, which I think was to be abolished next financial year, is now not going to be abolished until the subsequent financial year. Businesses in Queensland will again be disadvantaged because of the financial ineptitude of this government over the past few years and the fact that it went broke in a boom. This is more evidence, if any was needed, that the only federal government that truly understood economic reform and was able to stand up for businesses in Australia was the Howard-Costello government of 11 years ending in 2007.

The Payroll Tax Act amendments are designed to bring Queensland into line with other states in respect of the nexus for the payment of tax. Difficulties have occurred with the movement of workers and what enlivens the capacity of the tax commissioner in Queensland to recover payroll tax. There have been a number of problems with highly mobile employees, together with requirements about where the tax is paid. That is, is it paid into accounts and transferred throughout Australia, is it paid into a central account or is it paid into an individual account?

Other states have been quick to move to protect their revenue source by ensuring that there is a clearly understood nexus for businesses paying payroll tax. This legislation brings us into line with other states and provides a clear understanding for employers and employees of the basis upon which payroll tax is to be collected. The amendments provide that the liability for the tax is based on the location of the employee—that is, where they have their principal place of residence for the month in question on the last day of that month. Where the employee basically lives is now the nexus. If one lives in Queensland, if one's principal place of residence is in Queensland, it does not matter where one works; the payroll tax is payable in Queensland.

For employers the nexus will be taken to exist where the registered business address for ABN-holding employers is located and for non-ABN holders—trusts, and some organisations actually do not have an Australian business number—their principal place of business. This clarifies, simplifies and makes more easily understood the nexus for the obligation to pay payroll tax. We support the equal application of payroll tax for employers, but we also recognise its impact on employers and on employment. That is why at the last election we committed to an affordable, costed \$60 million payroll tax relief package to help employers and to address the issues of unemployment that the state was facing at that time.

We still believe that the best way to improve employment is to remove impediments to employing, such as payroll tax. If anyone goes around the state and talks to businesses, whether they be large or small, they would uniformly say that reform of the payroll tax system is singularly the largest and best thing that government could do to improve their capacity to employ people and to put them on good wages. It is uniform amongst the business community, whether they are members of chambers of commerce or the local newsagent: they all hate payroll tax.

**Mr Moorhead:** Who likes tax?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I hear the member say, 'Who likes tax?' No-one likes any tax, but what they certainly do not like is the increasing incidence of taxes that are paid in Queensland like the fuel tax that was introduced despite everyone on the opposite side saying, 'We're not going to do it.' When they ask, 'Who likes paying tax?', of course no-one likes paying tax. But people certainly do not like paying more tax than they have to and they certainly do not like paying more tax than they were told they were going to pay at the last election, and this government told the people of Queensland that they would not be paying a fuel tax and now they are!

The Taxation Administration Act 2001 provides that, where a taxpayer has received an amount from another person for all or part of the tax payable, the commissioner may make a refund of the tax only if satisfied the taxpayer will reimburse the other person for the amount received—that is, this is the windfall gains tax provisions. Where someone pays, as a component of payments they are legally obliged to pay, money to another person and that person then receives a refund of tax, they are obliged to make sure it trickles back down to the original payers.

The changes that are being proposed by this legislation make it obligatory for courts to make sure that there is no windfall gain, that the payment of tax is passed back to the payers. That is another of the changes being effected by this legislation. Those are some of the changes that go to the administration of tax in the state in terms of clarification of some of the rules in relation to obligations to pay tax, clarification of rights to reimbursement, clarification in terms of windfall taxes as well as the changes made to the first home owners grant.

This bill also deals with changes to the State Financial Institutions and Metway Merger Facilitation Act. On 1 December 1996, the Queensland government owned Suncorp and QIDC entities were merged into the public listed Metway Bank to create the new all finance group Suncorp Metway. At the time of that merger, Suncorp was a 100 per cent Queensland government owned corporation and was operating as an all finance group with approximately \$10 billion in assets.

One of the issues in relation to Suncorp was the fact that most of its assets and most of its insurance base was in Queensland and it did need to, in effect, extend itself outside the borders in order to give itself sufficient resources and reserves in order to meet claims made. The state government was initially the largest shareholder of the new group, with a 68 per cent holding consisting of shares in capital notes and 32 per cent was held by the existing Metway shareholders when the two were brought together. At the time of the merger the state government indicated an intention to sell down its holding in stages to no more than 15 per cent. But by 1997—within two years—the government went from owning 68 per cent of Suncorp to owning nothing.

**Mr Watt:** Who privatised that?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** The coalition government privatised that, but who took the benefit of the selldown from 68 per cent down to zero? The member for Everton asks, 'Who was responsible for it?' Yes, the coalition was responsible for it. It brought together in a competitive industry in a proper way with appropriate returns—not to plug a black hole in a budget—an organisation that provided structural reform in the insurance and finance businesses in Queensland. However, the then Queensland government also included the requirement to have a Queensland base and it also had a selldown provision.

It is interesting to note that two years after it was formed—because it was going broke back then in 1998—the Beattie government sold down all of its shares in it. It went to zero shares. It accelerated the selldown. In its haste to get into all of the hollow logs while it was racking up the returns from the GOCs, while it was forced to pay dividends instead of investing in capital, the government at that time said, 'No. Hand over the money and we'll sell off all the shares.' It is the same old plot. It is the same old Labor plot: 'We can't manage the finances so we're going to keep flogging off the assets as best we can to fill budgetary black holes.' That is what happened with Suncorp Metway.

After having given away the assets of Queensland back in 1998 when the then government sold itself down—a practice that is being repeated again—there were still head office restrictions which effectively restricted the movement of the head office of the Suncorp Metway group from Queensland to anywhere else. What has happened of course is that the markets have become more sophisticated. Investors understand more about what is going on.

Necessarily the parochialism that might have been in existence in 1995-96 when the original proposal was being put together is not necessarily there anymore, and the shareholders of Suncorp Metway have now said that they want to change the constitution to reflect current commercial practices and requirements—best practices in the interests of the shareholders and the people who are customers of the Suncorp group. So this bill is proposing to change one aspect of the requirement that each of what is called the Metway group of companies in the legislation locate its head office in Queensland by changing the requirement that either five directors or 40 per cent of the total number of directors of each company must also be residents in Queensland.

That change to the company's constitution was passed at the 2009 annual general meeting of Suncorp to enable it to appoint directors from outside Queensland, and this legislation facilitates that decision of the members of the company. As I said earlier, it still requires the managing director to be ordinarily resident here. The bill also makes some changes in relation to guarantees that were given prior to the merger occurring in 1996 which are fairly technical in nature.

The Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act provides for amendment to simplify the transition of public servants to being private sector employees while retaining their rights to QSuper. This process will be simplified so that a gazettal notice issued by the Treasurer will in effect ensure the protection of employees of government owned corporations that are being privatised—that is, it will ensure the protection of their rights in QSuper so that they will be able to continue to receive the benefits of QSuper. In terms of the privatisation for those workers who are concerned about it, this is a process that goes to giving them some certainty and some reassurance that a simple, straightforward process can be followed in order to protect their super.

The other issue is the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (Queensland) Act, which I made mention of earlier. As it stands today, the Governor may only make a gazette to change the regulations under the Commonwealth Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act by express authority of an act of parliament. It certainly makes a great deal more sense to allow those changes to be made by way of administrative arrangement—that is, subordinate legislation—of this House rather than an act every time something needs to be added to or repealed or removed from the schedules. This brings us into line with the other states around Australia in terms of mutual recognition of qualifications.

Turning now to the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act, it is the clauses in this portion of the bill that the LNP will be opposing. We will oppose these clauses because they allow the Bligh government to continue the disastrous, illogical, poorly justified and even more poorly administered privatisation agenda in terms of the path it has gone down. One would have hoped that the government, having made its decision to go down the privatisation path—which we opposed—would have at least had the gumption to go down it in a decent way and in a proper way. That is not the case.

It is clear that the government does not understand properly how the privatisation process should work and has closed its ears and its minds to any other alternative that might be put forward by anyone else to say, 'This is the way to get a better longer-term return for the people of Queensland.' This is not just as simple as the government going down to Cash Converters and trading something in for a bit of cash so that it can rebalance its bank accounts. There are repercussions, there are consequences and this government does not understand, and does not even seek to understand, the consequences of its ill-thought through and rushed privatisation process.

The consequences for Queensland's future economic prosperity of the changes in this bill to allow privatisation and 99-year leases will be disastrous for Queensland's economy. Everyone knows it. Industry knows it, the customers of Queensland Rail know it particularly and even federal Labor luminaries such as Anthony Albanese and Martin Ferguson can see the disastrous outcomes that will arise from this government's actions. But the Premier and the Treasurer have their heads collectively jammed in the sand when it comes to listening to alternatives that might be put forward for this ill-thought through and bad privatisation agenda.

**Mr Fraser:** Where's your head on this?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** As I said, the LNP will be opposing this section of the bill—

**Mr Fraser:** No, whereabouts is your head on this?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I will explain to the House our reasons for doing so. I will now explain, for those people who want to listen—because people have been saying, 'Tell us what you think. Tell us why. What is going on?' Now, I will do so. The Bligh-Fraser privatisation model is ill conceived, because it uses the wrong tools to target the wrong policy objective to the detriment of the wider Queensland community. The foremost policy consideration of the privatisation of Queensland's public assets must start with a long-term examination—a rigorous and detailed examination—that considers the long-term benefit to Queensland from the asset being held in public hands or in the private sector. So you have to do the assessment first.

In our view, the chief test is: what will deliver the greatest future economic prosperity to Queensland? That is the test. It is not whether you are ideologically for privatisation or ideologically against privatisation; it is what is going to deliver the greatest future economic prosperity to Queensland. It goes to the nature of the assets to be sold, the state of the market and competition for those asset services. There are other issues that need to be considered, but those are the three main ones.

Among the other issues to be considered is: are taxpayers getting the full value for the sale of their assets? Are they recovering the full amount that it would be reasonable and practical to expect to be received from the sale of those assets? Having looked at the timing of the announcement, the state of the financial markets and the prevalent credit lending restrictions, we are of the view that this was not the time—the time when these assets were announced for privatisation—to undertake the privatisation that is being effected at the moment. Credit markets were jammed. You could not get finance. There were not any buyers out there in the market who were expressing a willingness. It was not the right time. It was a rushed privatisation. It is our view that the full market value of the assets is unlikely to be achieved and a proper return to Queensland taxpayers is therefore unlikely.

The LNP believes that there are many areas where government has a responsibility—indeed, an obligation—to provide the services that are expected by Queenslanders and where divestiture would be inappropriate. There are places where the private sector can provide services, and it ought to do so. Equally, there are places where the public sector is the best sector to do that—where there is not a readily available private market, where there is not competition, where there is a public good that needs to be supported by the public purse in order to provide services for the welfare and good governance for the state of Queensland and the people who live here. So there are different areas where different criteria apply.

Let me be very clear. If the impetus for privatisation is addressing a shortfall in revenue—that is, because we are going broke—then the policy has already failed from the start, because you are saying, ‘Look at the bank account. We’ve lost our credit rating. We’ve gone into debt. We’re paying more on interest. We’ve had to access the Commonwealth guarantee. What we now need to do is sell off assets in order to prop up our failing financial management.’ The government has not done the right thing in the first place. So selling the assets in order to prop up the losses that it has made over past years and the borrowings that it is going to have to make is the wrong decision in the first place. If privatisation was done from a position of strength—if you said, ‘We don’t need to do this but we are doing it because it is the right thing to do, for whatever reason, and we think that this might be a better way to go’—that would be a different kettle of fish. But that is not the case that we face. The case here is a mad scramble for cash to fill in the black hole that has been discovered. That is one of the reasons this privatisation being undertaken by this government fails the test for the economic good governance of the state and fails the test of acceptance by the people of Queensland.

So rather than establishing good, solid, well-thought through policy and explaining that policy to the people of Queensland, this government aims no further than the next headline regardless of the consequences. Just like the water crisis that cost Queenslanders \$9 billion for a water grid that is now lying idle, this government is flogging off five assets without having done the homework of whether those assets are best held by the private or the public sector. Governments should not look at privatisation as a back-up plan for its own failure to plan, budget and deliver. Similarly, privatisation should not be undertaken simply for the sake of doing it and simply for the sake of a few extra bucks.

**Mrs Kiernan** interjected.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I hear some squawking going on in the back benches over to my left. This is what I said on 11 September 2008 when we discussed the equally unannounced sale of both the Mackay and the Cairns airports—

The LNP believes that privatisation can provide better outcomes and better value for money than traditional modes of service delivery in certain identified and defined areas... Whether it is in the form of divestiture, partnerships, alliance contracts or outsourcing, the interaction of the private and public sectors has the potential to deliver and be of enormous benefit to both the community and the economy. That is recognised by governments of all colours and at all levels.

Then I went on to say—

Governments should not look at privatisation as a backup plan for its own failure to plan, budget and deliver. Similarly, privatisation should not be undertaken simply for the sake of doing it and simply for the sake of a few extra bucks ... a government ... first must consider if there is a demonstrated community benefit. It must consider if it is being undertaken for more than a short-term economic return. As part of this process, the impact of privatisation on the community by changing the ownership of an asset or the manner of service delivery must be considered, with any concerns of that community listened to and considered and with appropriate structures being put in place to address those concerns.

Some of those structures may include a higher level of regulation, particularly in those instances where there is a monopoly position in the market and there is no competitive tension to control the desire of a private enterprise to maximise profits and minimise services.

I then went through a number of other issues and then said that there are instances where there is a monopoly situation where there would still need to be a very strong regulatory regime, for example, telcos and Telstra—and, for example, Queensland Rail. The right of access needs to be heavily regulated. I then said—

It can best be said that privatisation should not be seen as a short-term fix for long-term structural problems.

That is what we have in Queensland—long-term structural problems. I ask members to remember that this state’s finances were \$65 billion in the red before the global financial crisis came along.

**Mr Fraser:** Not true.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** It was \$65 billion in the red and it then went up to \$85 billion and now it has been revised in the midyear economic forecast back down to \$84.5 billion. This is a government that was already haemorrhaging money before the global financial crisis. It is a government that was unable to control its expenditure and was unable to manage the budget effectively, which saw public sector expenses growing year on year by over 10 per cent. The government failed to control any of that expenditure. So what is this government doing? This government is using the asset sales in order to plug up a budget black hole—a black hole that was rapidly approaching before the global financial crisis came to a head in 2009.

So because of lack of fiscal discipline and strong budget management and a complete inability to manage the growth boom in South-East Queensland, the Treasurer and the Premier have panicked on a massive infrastructure spending spree and they have now panicked again on a fire sale of Queensland assets. That is not prudent economic management. By trying to get the biggest return to the budget bottom line to mask this fiscal incompetence of this government, the Treasurer has gone for a rapid fire sale process of one state asset after another as quickly as possible. In doing so, the government’s economic dream team has totally missed some of the fundamentals of good economic policy—basics that have been pointed out to them by dozens of highly credentialed economists and economic commentators in recent months.



The role of the government goes well beyond good fiscal management, although that has not been the case here with this government. Governments such as the 12-year Howard-Costello economic team provided long-term structural changes to improve the economic delivery of services in Australia. No-one would argue that the Australian economy is now not a far more robust and better economy than it was in 1996 when that government came to power and found a \$95 billion debt when it got there.

Having well-functioning markets, properly regulated, is the surest way to get better outcomes for the community in the long run. The latest model for selling Queensland Rail will not achieve that. There is little doubt that the QR sale model, whereby the track network—that is, the so-called below-rail aspect of it—and the rolling stock—the above-rail assets—are to be sold as a single entity, will create significant and potentially intractable economic problems for the coal industry and hence for Queenslanders in the years ahead.

This type of vertically integrated monopoly—and that is what it is, a vertically integrated monopoly just like Telstra—will not deliver the outcome that the people of Queensland are entitled to. Anthony Albanese knows it; his concerns are reported in the *Financial Review* today. He has gone so far as to say that he is prepared to allow the Australian Rail Track Corporation to take a hand in putting a bid together with coal industry interests in order to see a different outcome from that which is being proposed by this government.

A vertically integrated QR monopoly will be virtually impossible to regulate and very bad for the coal business in terms of getting efficient and fair prices for haulage to the ports. We already know the problems that are being experienced by the coal companies in getting the coal to the ports. The O'Donnell report, which was commissioned in 2006, indicated quite clearly that the problems lay structurally within Queensland Rail. What is the government doing to fix that? It is moving the whole lot, holus-bolus, from a government monopoly to a private monopoly.

People will say that there will be regulations to allow third-party access. It will not work because, as a private enterprise owner of a private monopoly that is paying for that right, the private owners and their managers will want to maximise the return they get from their investment. That includes not making slots available. That includes all sorts of things that can be done to make sure that getting access at the time that the competitors want it—that is, third-party access rights on the track—will be extremely difficult.

The same old team that is there now will be in the new organisation. They are moving over. They own and control access to the track and will do what they can to minimise the competition on it. They have invested in it and no doubt feel that they should be able to get the maximum advantage out of it. The Treasurer will help them. He will recreate in private hands a public monopoly. It will be exactly the same situation as has occurred with Telstra. The access to the copper wire has been restricted because of the practices that Telstra has engaged in, despite an almost continuous regime of regulation and amendments and oversight by the ACCC. Despite all of that, there have still been innumerable court battles and both public and political disputes over getting access to that network. That is what the below-rail section of Queensland Rail will be like under the private monopoly proposal for privatisation that is being put forward by this government.

It is clear that even federal Labor has concerns about this model. Members have not been backward in putting those concerns in the public arena—Martin Ferguson twice last week and Anthony Albanese yesterday. This government has used too narrow a focus on the commercial return—that is, by trying to maximise the return to fix the black hole rather than putting in place all the requirements to make sure that we have a long-term viable proposal given that this privatisation ought not to be proceeding in the first place.

In relation to the privatisation of Queensland Motorways, we have seen what the government is doing in terms of putting up the toll for people using the Gateway Bridge. The toll was originally designed to pay off the Gateway Bridge. What we know under Labor is that Queensland Motorways Ltd has been burdened with enormous amounts of debt in order to continue to fund this government's spending. Now, instead of paying off the debt accrued for the Gateway Bridge, the Logan Motorway debt has been lobbed onto it, the Port of Brisbane Motorway debt has been lobbed onto it and the Gateway upgrade expansion has been lobbed onto it as well. The only way Queensland Motorways was going to be attractive to a buyer was by increasing the tolls. The next question we have to ask is: what will happen with distance based tolling? When will that be introduced? The gantries are already up on the Gateway Motorway. When will distance based tolling be introduced in order to make the price and the product even more appealing for the private sector? That will continue all the way through.

There are many other issues arising in relation to privatisation and the privatisation model being put forward by this government. What we do know is that Queenslanders do not support this privatisation. This government deceived Queenslanders when it said that it would not privatise. This Premier is regarded as not being able to be relied upon when she tells people that she will or will not do something. Every step of the way this government has ignored the best advice and has gone about its business with only one aim in mind, and that is to prop up its ailing budget and to cover up its fiscal ineptitude. For those reasons we will not support the changes.

There are many issues that I have raised in this speech, some of which I have received some answers to and some of which I look forward to the Treasurer providing some answers to. Some of the changes here are good and worthwhile, such as those changes that put legislative surety around some of the administration arrangements for exemptions, but on the whole, in terms of the sale of the assets, I urge the Treasurer to go back and look at the model he is proposing and come up with a model that considers the long-term benefits for Queenslanders and not the short-term interests of his government.

**Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (3.06 pm): I rise to speak on the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010. As the shadow Treasurer pointed out, this bill amends some six revenue statutes as well as five other pieces of legislation. The shadow Treasurer, the member for Clayfield, has considered each of these amendments in detail and outlined the LNP's stance on each so I would like to concentrate on three of the amendments only.

Firstly, as stated in the explanatory notes, the amendments to the Payroll Tax Act 1971 will change, from 1 July 2009, the territorial nexus for wages paid to employees providing services in more than one jurisdiction to ensure consistency with other jurisdictions. I know from talking to business owners and primary producers in my electorate that payroll tax continues to be an onerous burden. As one of my constituents put it, why should successful businesses be penalised for being successful? It stymies and frustrates the entrepreneurial nature of business owners when they are slugged with excessive charges once their hard work and investment begins to bear fruit. As a state we need to be exploring alternative revenue-raising methodologies that do not penalise those businesses that are flourishing. That said, these amendments will clarify the existing application of payroll tax in Queensland.

Again as explained in the explanatory notes, issues recently arose with employees working in more than one jurisdiction in a month. These issues included the impact of modern banking arrangements which make it easy to change the place where wages are paid. To address these issues, all jurisdictions have announced an intention to change the payroll tax nexus arrangements. I note that the amendments will have an effect from 1 July 2009. Again we are challenged by that spectre of retrospectivity. I refer to the *Legislation Alert* tabled this morning. In respect of whether the retrospective operation would adversely affect individuals, the explanatory notes indicate that for some individuals this is likely to be the situation. The impact on taxpayers will vary as some may become liable to pay in a lower taxing jurisdiction when the wages were previously liable in a higher taxing jurisdiction and vice versa.

In respect of whether individuals may have relied upon or have legitimate expectations based on the existing law, the explanatory notes state the change ensures that Queensland arrangements remain consistent with those applying in all other jurisdictions. As the other jurisdictions publicly announced an intention to change the nexus arrangements from 1 July 2009, it was necessary for Queensland to do the same to prevent double taxation or avoidance. The Office of State Revenue has advised all taxpayers of the change.

I note in the explanatory notes that, in recognition of the retrospective effect of these changes, transitional provisions are being included to ensure that an employer whose liability under the Payroll Tax Act 1971 increases as a result of the amendments will not be subject to any unpaid tax interest or penalty tax under the Taxation Administration Act 2001 or a penalty under the Payroll Tax Act 1971. I further note from the explanatory notes that where an employer's liability continues under the new nexus arrangements and this affects the employer's ability to comply with either the Payroll Tax Act 1971 or the Taxation Administration Act 2001 the employer will not be taken to commit an offence under either act if the employer or an administrator for the employer takes corrective action by the required time. I accept these conciliatory moves on the part of the government to ensure that no business owner will be hit with unpaid tax interest or penalty tax but still question the need for retrospective application in the first place.

Now I will touch briefly on changes to the Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990. These amendments simplify the current process for the continuation of eligibility for membership with QSuper for employees who are no longer employed by a state public sector unit as a result of the restructure of a government business. I note that, although these amendments will be beneficial to affected employees in relation to the declared projects under the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act 2009, these amendments apply more generally to all restructuring of government businesses. As the shadow Treasurer highlighted, the new process will be facilitated by a gazettal notice to be initiated by the minister, providing some safety to the public sector employees in question.

Finally, I turn to the part of the bill that the LNP will not be supporting. We will be opposing amendments to the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act 2009 as it will facilitate the asset sales process, which is a process that we have opposed from day one. One of the amendments will make provision for the minister to approve workforce transition codes of practice directed at ensuring the appropriate and fair treatment of employees affected by declared projects. If only the government abided by its own words: appropriate and fair treatment. If only the workers at

Forestry Plantations Queensland in my electorate felt like they were being treated appropriately and fairly; if only the workforce transition code of practice gave them some certainty of ongoing employment in their current location. Instead, their concerns are dismissed as rumour-mongering and the greedy cries of disgruntled individuals. On both counts, the government has it wrong. These are not rumour-mongers. They are government employees desperately seeking clarification as to their futures and the future of their families. They are not greedy, disgruntled individuals. They are part of the majority of the Queensland population that feels had, that continues to distrust the Premier and that continues to express dissatisfaction with her performance and the performance of this government.

The lunacy and dishonesty of the assets sale and other surprise taxes imposed by this government in the past 12 months was the focus of an article by Paul Syvret in today's *Courier-Mail*. After commenting on the government's increases of Queensland motorway tolls, Syvret rather cheekily proposes a few as yet untapped revenue honeypots that the Bligh government could still thrust a desperate paw into: a voting levy or poll tax, a licensed premise cover charge, beach passes, a no-more-its-the-law policy of calorie intake, registering of cycles, exhaust tunnel levies and perhaps a special Queensland residency fee to reflect the value of having a '4' at the beginning of our postcode. Syvret states—

There is a bountiful harvest of ripe fruit just waiting to be plucked. Then, we've established a good revenue stream, we can sell it.

Whilst clearly meant to be read with a significant amount of tongue-in-cheek, the underlying outrage at the government's dishonesty and inept economic management, at a time when it is needed most, is clear. In concluding my comments on the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010, I indicate that I concur with the closing remarks of Mr Syvret, who stated—

God forbid that government ever look at the expenditure side of the equation instead.

**Mr FINN** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (3.13 pm): I rise to support the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and to make a brief contribution to the debate today. The bill amends a number of acts to ensure that Queensland's revenue legislation is up to date and continues to deliver the intended outcomes across the legislative framework. In amending these legislative instruments, the bill delivers a number of beneficial amendments, some of which apply retrospectively to reflect administrative practice, with others aimed at ensuring the integrity of our system of revenue. I am going to focus on one aspect of this bill, but before I do so I will make reference to the contribution from the member for Glass House, in particular his comments regarding FPQ. He spoke about this matter in the House last sitting and I have since had a conversation with him.

The member for Glass House will know that the transitional code in relation to FPQ has been tabled in this House. It outlines a number of aspects of certainty to the terms and conditions of ongoing employment for workers in FPQ. A number of meetings have taken place with officers of the Department of Industrial Relations, and I have had some contact with those in my role as parliamentary secretary. The union has been actively engaged in representing those workers and has been making sure that the department is across issues affecting workers in that industry. Obviously, there can be degrees of uncertainty around processes that any government or employer is undertaking in terms of changing the arrangements or amending workplace practices. I now put on the record—and I have encouraged the member to follow this advice—that if workers in FPQ have concerns about issues affecting that industry or changes to their workplace and they take their concerns to a member, he or she should raise them directly through us and we will make sure that any concerns raised are responded to.

Today I intend to focus on one aspect of this bill and comment briefly on it, which is the amendment to the exempt institutions provision. The Duties Act 2001 allows certain organisations to register as exempt institutions and many charities, churches, schools and colleges are registered in this way. Registration under the provisions of the Duties Act exempts these institutions from duty on certain instruments and transactions where prescribed conditions are satisfied. One of the conditions is that the property that is the subject of the instrument or transaction must be used solely or almost solely for the qualifying exempt purpose. These may include activities for the relief of poverty, caring for the sick or elderly or activities of a religious or educational nature.

The current legislation requires that the property which is the subject of the transaction will be used for a qualifying exempt purpose within six months of duty liability arising. The property must also continue to be used for that purpose for at least 12 months. This was outlined in the former Stamp Act 1894, which was replaced by the current Duties Act. Similar provisions in the Stamp Act also provided the commissioner with a discretion to extend the date for commencing to use property for the exempt purpose. Under the Stamp Act it was the commissioner's longstanding practice to exercise the discretion to extend the start date in certain cases, provided a definite time frame for the commencement of the use of the property for the exempt purpose was proposed by the institution seeking the exemption. It meant that an extended period could be granted where a property was acquired to be developed into a church or a school and the construction would generally take longer than six months.

Under the Duties Act the equivalent exemption was not drafted as broadly as that under the Stamp Act. Issues arise where an exempt institution advises the commissioner, when applying for an exemption, that it cannot meet the six-month time frame but can satisfy the use condition within a further period. In those cases, the commissioner had no discretion to extend the start date. The Duties Act has been administered on the basis that the commissioner continue the practice of extending start dates that existed under the Stamp Act pending amendment. This bill contains the amendment that provides the commissioner with the discretion to extend the start date for the use of a property by an exempt institution that is in line with the discretion that existed under the previous act.

The issue for relief for charitable organisations came to my attention when I was visited by Deaf Services Queensland for assistance when it was securing a property in my electorate in the suburb of Yeerongpilly. Deaf Services Queensland was able to locate a suitable building and proceeded with the purchase. However, the building was purchased under an agreement that an existing tenant, who occupied 28 per cent of the building, would continue the occupancy under the existing lease through to 2012. As the building was partially tenanted with rental paid to the organisation, the application for stamp duty exemption was rejected and Deaf Services Queensland was charged stamp duty on the full 100 per cent of the purchase, even though 72 per cent was being used for charitable purpose. Deaf Services Queensland appealed this decision. However, the appeal was not allowed and on its behalf I advocated to the Treasurer that relief be provided to the organisation. Section 72i of the Financial Accountability Act 2009 allows the Under Treasurer to consider *ex gratia* relief and I was pleased to advise Deaf Services Queensland that the Under Treasurer had determined that it be required to pay duty only on the commercial aspect of the property. This provided Deaf Services Queensland with duty relief amounting to a little over \$125,000 and also enables it to apply for relief for the commercially leased part of the property, should this be used for charitable purposes, within three years of the six-month start date. This allows the current tenant to see out the current lease period to 2012.

Deaf Services Queensland provide great services to many deaf and hard of hearing people across Queensland and have done so in one form or another for 108 years. The success of this organisation is reflected in the fact that they have managed their funds wisely and were able to purchase a building and secure their future without government contribution to the purchase price. The provision of stamp duty relief has removed a significant financial burden for the organisation and has enabled them to focus their efforts and funds on their charitable activities. I commend the work of this organisation and particularly the efforts of general manager Mr Brett Casey and CEO Mr Angelo Toscano, who brought this matter to my attention.

The provisions in this bill that amend the Duties Act as it applies to charitable organisations confirm current administrative arrangements and provide the commissioner discretion in line with the intention of the Stamp Act provisions. This will enable exempt organisations that provide charitable services in our community to better access duties relief. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr WENDT** (Ipswich West—ALP) (3.20 pm): Today I wanted to say a few words about two aspects of the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Firstly, I will talk about the first home owner grant and how it has been successful in assisting people buying or building their first home and thus allowing them to enter the housing market. Secondly, I will also touch on the trans-Tasman mutual recognition amendment.

Firstly, I think it is important to remember that the first home owners grant is of course a national scheme administered and funded by the states and territories under their own legislation. In Queensland, for instance, the grant is administered by the Commissioner of State Revenue under the First Home Owner Grant Act 2000. This grant, as many would know, was introduced to assist housing affordability for people buying their first home in Australia at a time when the costs were affected by the introduction of the goods and services tax, or GST, way back on 1 July 2000. As such, the grant was effectively aimed at offsetting the expected increased costs of the GST and at the same time to provide support for the housing industry which may otherwise have experienced a post-GST decline.

In view of this, the principles behind the grant were set out in the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Reform of Commonwealth-State Financial Relations, signed in 1999. Under those principles, the grant was designed to be a once only payment for first home buyers—that is, a grant payable for an eligible completed transaction to buy or build a first home but only if all of the applicants met the eligibility criteria, and of course only one first home owner grant was payable per application.

From the introduction of the grant in 2000 until 1 January 2010, all first home buyers were entitled to the grant regardless of the value of the home being purchased or built. However, in Queensland, since 1 January this year, eligibility for the grant has been capped at homes valued up to \$1 million. As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, Queensland led the way in introducing this cap which followed community concerns that some grants were being paid to first home owners who were buying \$1 million plus homes, and rightly so. I believe that it could be considered that if someone was purchasing a home of this value then they probably did not need Queensland taxpayers subsidising their purchase.

As such, subsequent to Queensland's announcement of a \$1 million cap, New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory also proceeded to announce the introduction of a cap, but they started theirs at \$750,000 from 1 January 2010. As a result of this, in January this year the government announced its intention to reduce the existing cap applying to the grant from \$1 million to \$750,000 in Queensland. As such, the amendments currently before the parliament will align the Queensland cap with that of other jurisdictions.

Research shows that the average price of homes for which the grant is paid in Queensland is lower than the median house price in Brisbane. For example, the median house price paid in Brisbane at June 2009 was \$410,000, while the median price paid for all Queensland homes for which the grant was paid was only \$340,000. As we can see based on this analysis, the new \$750,000 cap will in fact affect very few first home buyers. Madam Deputy Speaker, to give you further proof, I am aware that during 2008-09 there were only 256 grant payments in Queensland for homes valued between \$750,000 and \$1 million. This is 256 grants out of a total of 34,465 grant payments made during the period.

It is also important to note that this new cap will apply to contracts of sale and comprehensive building contracts entered into on or after 31 March 2010, and for owner builders the new cap will only apply to homes where the commencement of building works is on or after 31 March 2010. As always, I believe that this grant will continue to provide significant assistance to those most in need when entering the housing market for the first time and as such will continue to allow them to achieve the great Australian dream of homeownership.

With this in mind, I believe that the new cap will better target that assistance to those first home buyers most in need. However, it is important to note that all first home buyers are also assisted in achieving the dream of homeownership through other measures introduced by this government. For example, in 2008 Queensland led the way in introducing increases in the transfer duty home concessions so that transfer duty on the purchase of a home or first home up to \$1.5 million was lower than in any other jurisdiction.

I would now like to comment on the amendments to the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (Queensland) Act 2003 contained in this bill. It is my belief that these amendments will simplify the process to endorse Commonwealth amendments to the goods and occupations exempt from the operation of the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Scheme. As such, I believe that this will enable Queensland to respond more quickly to future changes in the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Scheme at the Commonwealth level. Madam Deputy Speaker, as you would know, the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (Queensland) Act 2003 works in tandem with the Commonwealth's Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1992, with the trans-Tasman scheme being an extension of the mutual recognition agreement, and as such aims to create a national market for goods and registered occupations.

Currently, Madam Deputy Speaker, as you are aware, Queensland is the only jurisdiction that relies on an act of parliament to endorse regulations made under the Commonwealth's Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act. As such, the amendments before us today bring Queensland into line with other jurisdictions by removing the requirement for an act of parliament for Queensland to endorse Commonwealth regulation amending the goods and occupations that are exempt from the operation of the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Scheme.

These amendments will mean that, when all participating jurisdictions are in agreement, particular goods—for example, drug paraphernalia—should be excluded from the mutual recognition scheme and that the process will not be delayed because other jurisdictions are waiting on Queensland to pass an act of parliament. As such, the Commonwealth will now be able to close loopholes quicker and make other changes that are requested by jurisdictions in a timely fashion.

In addition, I believe that the bill will ensure Queensland can contribute to the routine administration of the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Scheme. With this in mind at the current time, several Commonwealth regulations under the Commonwealth Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act need to be remade each year for administrative purposes. These remakes require endorsement by two-thirds of the jurisdictions. However, the current arrangements mean that Queensland has left this work to other states and territories to carry out, and I believe that this is simply not good enough.

As such, these amendments make the common-sense change to align the endorsement process under the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (Queensland) Act 2003, with the equivalent provision in the Commonwealth Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act and will thus reduce our reliance on other jurisdictions in terms of ensuring the necessary regulations are being made. With those few words, I support the bill.

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—LNP) (3.27 pm): I rise to speak to the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010. From the outset, I want to congratulate the shadow Treasurer on his very comprehensive and detailed analysis of the legislation from the opposition's perspective. There is only one aspect of this legislation that I want to speak to, and that is the privatisation clause and the issue of the government divesting itself of Queensland Rail, Abbot Point and the Port of Brisbane. Again, it goes

to show that this government is certainly in crisis. This government wants to divest itself of these prime assets when it is not a good time to sell. Those opposites preach every day of the week about the global financial crisis. When you have a crisis on your hands, it is not a good time to sell anything. The issue is: what is going to happen to the remnants of Queensland Rail when we see that privatisation go through? The Treasurer might like to comment on that in his summing-up at a later hour.

At the current time for cattle trains from western Queensland—I am talking about places like Quilpie, Winton and Cloncurry—you never know from one day to the next whether there are going to be locomotives available, whether there are going to be locomotive drivers to drive those trains or whether there is going to be rolling stock at all. I remember that in my time as a minister of this state we had 1,000 wagons in QR livestock for cattle trains. Now it is only 500. Now we do not seem to be able to even get a train. A critical situation exists, and with privatisation we will probably see no rail services at all to western Queensland. I would like to have that reinforced by the Treasurer in his summing-up. Are we going to see a continuation of these services?

We have freight trucks running into Charleville. We have freight trucks running into Longreach, carrying goods to railway stations now and dropping them off. We have the same situation in Cunnamulla. Now that these places have received good rains and are having abundant seasons, we will see a lot of wool and cattle coming out of them. What will happen with our rail services? Again, this government is forgetting what the real determination is for that area. It is about the productivity of the wool and beef industries.

The price of a deck at Quilpie is \$1.35 on road. Queensland Rail now wants \$1.60 for a deck—that is for a KL, a 50-foot wagon—and that is too expensive for the competitors. When I say 'the competitors', I am talking about competition between road and rail. What will happen is that most of the cattle that come into Quilpie or Winton will go via road instead of via rail. There is a compounding problem here. Instead of Queensland Rail keeping that type of traffic off the road, we will see it go via road.

I will give one other example. We will have a situation in western Queensland, in places like Barcoo, Diamantina and the Boulia shire, whereby cattle will not go to Brisbane because it is too far. They will go straight onto road transport through Birdsville. A bit over half of that road between Boulia and Birdsville is sealed now. Those cattle will go straight down to Maree, Leigh Creek and onto Murrays Bridge and Naracoorte to be slaughtered and processed at those plants, because it is only 1,200 kilometres from Birdsville to those slaughterhouses in South Australia. In addition to losing railway jobs and jobs right across Queensland, meat industry jobs in the south-east will dry up, too. At Swift in Dinmore they are killing 3,500 head of cattle a day. A lot of those cattle will now go to South Australia. The same will probably apply to Teys Brothers at Beenleigh. What will happen to the cattle that go into places like Rockhampton and Biloela? Again, we will see those western cattle slaughtered elsewhere. There is going to be a pow of them this year, Mr Deputy Speaker, because the season is mickey mouse, I have to tell you.

I heard the shadow Treasurer comment today on the lockup of coal trains on the network. I have Blackwater in my electorate. It is the hub for those big coal trains that run into the port of Gladstone. I was coming along there one day and I counted 15 of them fully loaded and locked up on the points waiting for other traffic to come through. I do not believe this situation is satisfactory to our trading partners. We talk about Hay Point and Dalrymple Bay and ships sitting off the coast because we cannot get the traffic in there. The real reason is poor planning. The O'Donnell report that was put in place by this government certainly identified that. Again, we see 22 sets of coal wagons operating at Jilalan. They will now be driving at capacity to carry the coal that comes from the top of the Bowen Basin.

The privatisation of Queensland Rail is a rushed job. Any time you have a rushed job, something buggers up. That is certainly going to be the situation here. The real issue I am concerned about is: what is the future for western Queensland rail services? Are we going to see all those tracks torn up? They will probably go to Roma. Look at what is happening around Roma at the moment. There is a boom in the gas industry that nobody ever comprehended. I still do not think we have a full comprehension of it or of just how complex this industry is. It probably goes from Moomba right through to Roma and beyond and right up into the southern part of my electorate into the Arcadia Valley and probably further north, for all we know.

With the technology available today, I really think this is selling off the family jewellery before we know the true worth of that jewellery. Hancock Coal, Hancock Prospecting and Waratah Coal are going to put in place probably one of the biggest coalmines in the world just north of Alpha. They will be building 500 kilometres of standard-gauge track right through to Abbot Point. I was sitting here today thinking that I bet those two companies have their sights set on Abbot Point. I hope they do buy them if they are for sale, because at least we will see them stay in some form of Australian ownership. The vision that these people have is a big vision. It will create something like 5,000 jobs in the construction stage but, most importantly, it is going to create multimillions of dollars for the economy of not only this state but also this nation.

We heard the Premier rightfully in the chamber this morning talk about the royalties from these mines. It is not only those mines but also the mines right through that area in question interfaced with the grain industry, the cattle industry, the wool industry and the oil and gas industries. What are we going to do? We are going to sell the main conveyor of productivity, Queensland Rail. You bet we are. Why are we going to sell it? Because we are busted. Why are we busted? Because we cannot manage. We are poor managers. If I gave you a \$100 bill, you would run down to the shop and spend it. You would not put it in your pocket and think about it. You would run down there and spend it. What we should be doing is giving you 100 cents and then you would know what it is like to go without.

The biggest problem here is that half of the people on the government side have never run a business, they have never been broke and they have never had to pay the wages. That is the real problem. They have had no real life experience when it comes to business. I look at some of these operators now and think of some of the advice they are getting. Some of the people on the other side talk to me behind the scenes and say that they do not favour this. Well, show some guts and stand up and tell the people of Queensland that you do not support it. Tell your Premier that you do not support it. Tell your Treasurer that you do not support it. Do not sit there and cower and think about it.

The real issue here is that you are going to give this away. When you give it away, you will not be able to get it back. The Victorian government sold its railways because of poor management under the Cain and Kirner Labor governments. Now what do they want to do in Victoria? They want to buy it back, but they cannot buy it back because the people who bought it know what a good return on investment it is.

**Mr Kilburn:** A Liberal government sold it.

**Mr JOHNSON:** Do you know why they sold it? Because they were broke. They were absolutely busted because of Labor administrations just like yours. You are a Labor man, old mate. Don't sit and hide behind a paper, because I will stand up, yell out and tell you what you are hiding behind.

**Mr Kilburn** interjected.

**Mr JOHNSON:** What do you have there—Mr Rudd or someone, is it? He is another one of your mates. I saw that magazine. If you want to interject on me, old mate, I will give you all the responses you want.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Wendt): Order! I have listened now for eight minutes and I am struggling to find relevance in relation to this issue. I would ask you to come back to the bill. The member for Gregory has the call.

**Mr JOHNSON:** The issue with this bill that I have been talking about is the privatisation of Queensland Rail—the selling off of our assets. If we go back to the early nineties, when the Goss government wanted to close down railway lines in this state, there were two members of parliament on the government side at the time who supported the opposition. One was the former Premier, Peter Beattie, and the other was the then member for Archerfield, Len Ardill. I wonder what Len Ardill would think about what is happening today.

I see the member for Everton having a little grin to himself. The real issue is that this is a sad indictment on the hard work of Queenslanders over 150 years and what our railway has meant to this state. It is naive, irresponsible and certainly not in the context of forward planning and forward vision to sell an asset like this at a time when this state is on the eve of one of the biggest explosions in wealth generation through its gas, oil, coalmining and mineral industries.

This is about jobs. Every day we hear the Premier talk about the 100,000 jobs that her government is going to create in this term of government. I hope she does create 100,000 jobs, but they have to be 100,000 jobs that have value. Those jobs will come from the construction industry, the transport industry and the infrastructure industry. These industries are where activity will be created and thus wealth generated.

I again say to the government members and the Treasurer that a very big responsibility attaches to what they are trying to do here. It was Joan Sheldon and I who from 1996 to 1998 separated the Queensland Rail track from other operations so that we could have national competition and third-party access. I know there have been issues with regard to third-party access but, at the end of the day, we have to make absolutely certain that we do not lose what is rightfully ours and what rightfully belongs to the people of Queensland.

**Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (3.41 pm): I rise today to make a contribution to the debate on the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010. The bill amends the following Queensland revenue statutes: the Community Ambulance Cover Act 2003; the Duties Act 2001; the First Home Owner Grant Act 2000; the Land Tax Act 1915; the Payroll Tax Act 1971; and the Taxation Administration Act 2001. The bill also amends the GST and Related Matters Act 2000; the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act 2009; the State Financial Institutions and Metway Merger Facilitation Act 1996; the Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990; and the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (Queensland) Act 2003.

Many of the amendments are beneficial and a number have been operating under administrative arrangements. Other amendments clarify the operation of the legislation or update or correct superseded terms or references. According to the Bligh Labor government, the remaining amendments are considered necessary to protect revenue. The amendments and their impact allow the government to facilitate the divestment of the state's interests in a variety of businesses, assets and liabilities currently held through several government owned corporations and other government owned entities.

The LNP will be opposing clauses pertaining to the amendments to the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act 2009 as they will facilitate the asset sales process. The opposition was gagged in the debate during the budget sitting last year. The government debated five bills cognately and guillotined the debate in order to gag members from representing the views of their constituents. Residents in the Mudgeeraba electorate were angered that they were misled on this and many other issues by the Bligh Labor government, which knew that these assets would be sold prior to calling the 21 March 2009 election.

This legislation is the first opportunity to discuss the asset sale process since the legislation was rushed through the parliament with no consultation with Queenslanders. In June last year Queenslanders heard a confession—a confession from Anna Bligh and Andrew Fraser that confirms the public's suspicion that Labor hid the state of our finances from the voting public just three months before calling an early election. Today Queenslanders understand just how financially incompetent this Labor government is and that every man, woman and child has been condemned to a decade of debt because of this incompetence.

Queenslanders today understand that when we fill up our cars, buy food at the supermarket, turn on the tap, flick on the lights—basically every daily activity—it is now more expensive thanks to the ineptitude and incompetence of this government. Andrew Fraser and Anna Bligh misled the public and blamed the state of the economy on the global financial crisis when in fact it was this government that racked up over \$64 billion in debt long before the global financial crisis hit and allowed Queensland to go bust in a boom.

We are facing government debt of \$85.5 billion. To put it in simple terms, for an average family of four that is a \$78,000 debt each. Yes, a massive \$78,000 debt each—not per household, each. It is going to cost Queensland taxpayers \$14 million a day every day just to pay the interest bill on this \$85.5 billion of debt. The once proud history of Queensland as the low-tax, lifestyle capital of Australia is now becoming a distant memory. We are the only state in Australia to have lost its AAA credit rating, having previously been the nation's economic powerhouse. The deceit has now cost this great state a burden of debt, but unfortunately it is not a burden that it alone has to carry. The government has now extended this burden to every single Queensland mother, father and child.

It is also clear that Queenslanders do not trust the Bligh Labor government, as reported on the ABC News website on 3 June 2009. It states—

Ms Bligh rejected Opposition accusations plans for a \$15 billion privatisation of assets should have been outlined during the March election campaign, saying circumstances changed after the poll.

...

The Government will sell the Port of Brisbane, Queensland Motorways, Forestry Plantations Queensland, Queensland Rail's coal business and the Abbot Point Coal terminal in the state's north.

It will also scrap the eight-cents-a-litre fuel subsidy to save \$2.4 billion over four years.

Ms Bligh says there may be a stock market float to sell some public assets over the next five years.

'Having made the decision, I felt it was important to publicly announce it as soon as possible,' she said.

'But we will now sit down in a careful way and consider each one of these and how they should be structured and what sort of sale should occur and whether a float is a possibility in any of those cases.'

It was reported in the *Age* on 20 July 2009—

Queensland Premier Anna Bligh will not budge on her decision to sell \$15 billion of public assets despite an expected voter backlash at the next election.

The Queensland government passed laws in June to allow the sale of assets, including the Port of Brisbane, Queensland Motorways and Queensland Rail's coal freight business.

Results from a union campaign and poll against privatising assets to reduce Queensland's debt have revealed a voter backlash in safe Labor seats.

Ms Bligh said her government had known it could face a backlash at the polls due in 2012 ...

She said the sell-off would go ahead because it would reduce Queensland's debt levels and restore its AAA credit rating.

The Electrical Trades Union (ETU) is sinking \$1 million into a campaign against privatisation which includes placing billboards against the proposal in the electorates of Labor politicians who voted for the sale.

ETU state secretary Peter Simpson said the government had timed the sell-off in the hope voters would forget about the decision before the next election.



'The laws have been passed, but they haven't been enacted and our goal in the next two-and-a-half years is to make sure they're not enacted,' Mr. Simpson said.

'People are genuinely outraged ... because they weren't consulted, they weren't told about it before the election and they (the government) are selling their asset, so they're pretty dirty about it.'

Bumper stickers read: 'See Queensland first before Bligh sells it.'

Results from the ETU poll showed that 37 per cent of Labor voters would switch their vote because of the privatisation, while 60 per cent of 'soft voters' indicated they would be more likely to switch their vote as a result.

The Queensland Council of Unions is also planning a year-long anti-privatisation campaign with details expected to be known after July 28.

The Rail, Tram and Bus Union, the Australian Services Union, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Employees Queensland and the Maritime Union of Australia have been organising meetings and rallies in regional communities.

The website [www.qldnotforsale.org.au](http://www.qldnotforsale.org.au) states—

The Queensland Government in June 2009 announced that it intended to sell off some of our public assets to help meet its budget promises.

Queensland Rail's coal and freight arms, Queensland Motorways, the Port of Brisbane and forestry plantations are all up for sale.

Queensland unions are leading a community campaign opposing the sell-off of public assets. Our campaign through Queensland in June and July received widespread support from all Queenslanders wanting to ensure public assets remain in public hands.

These assets must be operated in the interests of the people of Queensland, rather than in the interests of shareholders' profits.

Research shows Queenslanders want the government to maintain our assets—not sell them off in a panic when times are tough.

Selling off Queensland's public assets for infrastructure building is a short-term solution that will have long-term consequences for Queenslanders.

Our state will lose valuable money-making public assets—and we will never be able to reclaim them.

In the average Queensland household, when times get tough you might tighten your belts and talk to the bank manager—you do not sell your house.

Our Railways which were built with public money will be sold off to operators more interested in making money than providing a vital service to our regional industries, such as mining and farming.

Our Ports which were built with public money will become private gateways possibly owned and operated by foreign interests.

Our Motorways users will face higher charges and reduced maintenance levels to maintain profits for private companies.

Our forests will no longer be managed for the benefit of Queenslanders but for the operator's profit margin.

Privatising public assets has been disastrous throughout the world—you can act to make sure Queensland doesn't make the same mistake.

Lastly, from the website of ABC News on 9 March 2010—

Thousands of workers have gathered in Brisbane calling on the Queensland Government to end its privatisation plans. An estimated 4,000 workers marched on Parliament House over the Government's plans to sell off its rail, port and forestry assets. Electrical Trade Union (ETU) spokesman Peter Simpson says Queenslanders do not support the asset sales. 'Since this was announced in May, 80 per cent of Queenslanders have stuck to the message and said "we're opposed to these asset sales—we don't want them to go ahead",' he said. Rail, Tram and Bus Union ... spokesman Owen Doogan says the government is not listening to Queenslanders. 'It's a disgrace,' he said. 'It's a betrayal and the people of Queensland are not going to stand by and allow this privatisation to occur—we're going to fight it and we're going to win it.'

It is not rocket science that selling off our assets against the wishes of Queenslanders at a time when mums and dads are fighting to hold on to their most valuable assets such as their homes is ludicrous. As noted in the contribution to the second reading debate by my colleague the member for Clayfield—

It is this portion of this bill, clauses 79 to 83, that the LNP will be opposing. We oppose this section because it allows the Bligh government to continue its disastrous, illogical, poorly justified and even more poorly administered privatisation agenda. Expecting the Bligh government to do a good job of privatisation is like expecting an atheist to write a good communion. They do not understand what is required or why a government would privatise major assets. It is not as simple as toddling down to Cash Converters and exchanging goods for cash. There are repercussions, there are consequences and this government does not understand and does not even seek to understand the consequences of its privatisation actions.

This government cannot be trusted. It announced the sale of our assets only after it had misled the Queensland public. This is the same government that went bust in a boom, allowing us to become the only state in Australia to lose its AAA credit rating, and the same government that has condemned Queenslanders to years of debt. Unlike those opposite, who all voted to sell Queensland, I can hold my head high in the electorate of Mudgeeraba and demonstrate that at least I and my opposition colleagues stood up for our electorates in Brisbane. I can assure those opposite that their constituents will be reminded for the next two years about how the assets they once owned were stolen from them and how the government had the gall to try to sell back to them something that they used to own!

**Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—LNP) (3.51 pm): In anyone's reasonable assessment of the management of state finances, Queensland's performance under the Bligh Labor administration rates as our worst ever. That assessment is universally held across Australia. When the Labor government's most recent examination under the financial microscope was performed, the general opinion was that Bligh and Labor had managed our economy just about as badly as could have been done—masters of their own destiny, but the tragedy is that it is a shared journey that we all have to endure. This bill is about revenue. Without doubt, this is the oxygen that keeps our state rolling. This bill is, as other speakers have described, an omnibus bill that has an impact on everything from payroll tax to GST to the first home owner grant.

Revenue currently in the state context is hovering around the \$40 billion mark, with expenses in this current financial year exceeding this by \$1.3 billion and projected to double in the next financial year. Our current state debt has climbed to over \$80 billion—\$85.5 billion is the estimate—a twentyfold increase in 14 years. Incidentally, the revenue base has only trebled in that same time frame. Interest rates in that time have declined but, since federal Labor returned to power, are now sitting at half that of 14 years ago. Numbers are very interesting things, as is comparing historical reports. The three major indicators of real significance when looking at revenue must be the growth in the revenue base, the growth in the expenditure base and the debt, both net and growth in that debt, as a proportion of the revenue base. Expenditure is growing at near double the rate of any other comparable time in our history and is double that of the revenue base uplift. Net debt is increasing because of the failure of cost controls over our major projects and uncontrolled and inappropriate capital expenditure. The growth of that debt is also due to poor management of projects together with an inability to deliver projects that yield income.

Before anyone opposite gets too animated and jumps up to say, 'We're selling assets and we're building infrastructure,' this bill does not address the issue of asset sales. However, the rationale for the asset sales is not only questionable; it may be catastrophic. The Treasurer in his second reading speech stated—

This bill inserts new provisions to facilitate the lease of these projects and provides appropriate commercial certainty for the state and the ongoing businesses.

This amendment to the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act 1990 is driven by the demands of bankers and ratings agencies. The government is reacting to fear and intimidation. In this scenario it only has itself to blame, but this is not the correct response in difficult times. The member for Gregory has correctly explained why, as have the shadow minister and the member for Mudgeeraba. The idea that asset sales such as these will deliver certainty is flawed. In contrast to today's comments by the Treasurer regarding supportive statements of Peter Holmes a Court and John Prescott, these do not mean anything from a dying Labor government trying to flog off assets in a market that is currently static. I sense that the statement of the Treasurer is reflective of a major lack of experience in business and assessing what businesspeople are really saying and why they say it.

Treasurer, Peter Holmes a Court and John Prescott are independent directors and see a great opportunity here because a laggard government cannot drive efficiencies from a massive state owned asset that has a key strategic role in the current and many future developments of cash-earning capital investments made by the state. Overwhelmingly, there are links between the mines and our ports. The sale of the above-rail network and, by default, the licence to transport these products is a growth business. Revenue from it will drive capital return to investors. These businessmen know what this can do for a company's fortunes.

Strangely, it was Peter Holmes a Court's father, Robert Holmes a Court, who stalked BHP whilst John Prescott was a major executive of that company. The Treasurer may not realise that. Arguably, Holmes a Court would have been the enemy of the board at that time—and that has been well stated—the executive and the staff, John Prescott amongst them. Robert Holmes a Court's mantra was purchasing using highly leveraged capital and divestment of anything where the internal rate of return was not above his very rigorous formula—he used a formula of 20 per cent and anything above it—and he further leveraged on the target company's equity base. BHP chose John Elliott's marginally better solution. It cost shareholders and the Australian taxpayers a fortune. Many staff lost their jobs and the Australian steel industry was changed forever. Treasurer, read this as a massive loss of capital—both financial and human.

The Brisbane and Sydney stockbroking fraternity are supportive of this proposal because—and the Treasurer should not be fooled—the fees for this float will generate exorbitant returns, and he should ignore today's *AFR* report. Mum-and-dad shareholders will legitimately see QR as a gilt-edged float. I do not want to talk it down and I do not even want to let some of those potential investors down, but QR is a troubled goliath. It is not well managed. It has very lucrative contracts. It is only just on the cusp of a whole new era of massive income generation. Its staff—long-suffering—have toiled away in various downstream divisions for many years that have been ignored. The benefits of coal leases, electrification

and automation—that is, largely everything other than rolling stock—have largely eroded their opportunities and their job security. A share market float via privatisation really places many of those jobs, because they are medial, as old world and potentially redundant. For a government that gloats in a ‘jobs, jobs, jobs’ mantra, it is publicly saying that only those jobs for the favoured few will remain and that its mates will be protected above those others.

QR, the motorways, the forestry assets and the ports are critical capital assets of the state. It is no wonder that key businesspeople want to see them unshackled from the bonds of a government—especially a Labor government such as the Bligh Labor government, whose management style is inherently obstructive, wasteful and antiquated. The promise of privatisation for businesspeople is to be rid of negligent union hacks running substantial businesses which are businesses that have growth and income potential.

The problem with the argument in the government’s case is that the capital return at this time is not reflective of the true value of the business. Unfortunately, timing is everything. It is axiomatic in business that one does not sell straw hats in winter and one does not sell the golden egg. The coal haulage lines are the goose that lays the golden egg and the consideration of the sale of other assets such as motorways and forests in this market is wrong. The failure of Timbercorp and SAPFOR in forestry is salient with regard to the issue of the forestry assets.

The divestment of assets by the liquidators in the case of Timbercorp and SAPFOR has driven down the value of the assets in this market. The current difficulty with the Lane Cove tunnel in Sydney, which is the main thing that is affecting motorway prices, and the economics of the current Airport Link project, which was championed again today, are driving down values. As most people know, a Canadian infrastructure fund is currently stalking Transurban and is trying to determine an outcome that is driven on getting a higher rate of return for income. The Macquarie Bank continues to shed most of its surplus, poorly performing motorways investments, including in Australia. The motorway assets, arguably, have grown in value because there is no standard gauge railway link to the Fisherman Islands port and the major north-south link in Brisbane is now the Gateway Bridge duplication.

The asset sales are not strategic. They are a desperate attempt at financial face saving with the government’s own constituency which, surprisingly enough, seems to not want to support it. As evidence of basically what has been stated here today, it demonstrates poor economic management skills. It also demonstrates how bad is the collective thinking of the members of the Labor Party, particularly the ones who are running the show. Revenue growth is achieved only by growing businesses and achieving above-the-line returns after expenditure.

The government must focus on sticking to the task and managing the state. Queenslanders have stated that they do not believe that Labor has the right to sell the assets. More specifically, Premier Bligh was not given a mandate to do so. This loss of trust has occurred because each Queenslander knows that privatisation is going to affect their lives and, basically, their children’s lives. I ask members to remember that, for a lot of people, life is difficult at this point, and it is always relatively difficult.

This type of thinking should extend back into the government. No amount of spin and nonsense from a populist government will ever defend the indefensible. The government has failed economically and this revenue bill is just another piece of evidence to demonstrate its failings. The Treasurer talked about the community. People are waiting for him with baseball bats. Not only has the Treasurer not delivered on his promises; he has also consigned our constituents to a very difficult 25 years ahead.

The revenue bill also addresses the issue of payroll tax. This bill will increase the net payroll tax to facilitate the Labor state government’s net return. The adjustment is apparently justified by saying that it is an attempt to avoid the issue of double taxation as a result of other jurisdictions possibly charging payroll tax as well. I see this amendment as a pre-emptive move in preparation for other states declaring their probable decision to progressively phase out payroll tax, as should be the case in the post-GST world we have had in Australia for 12 years now. Basically, a tired Labor government is attempting to defend its payroll tax base. I do not think it is worthwhile in the longer term, because we live in a competitive environment. We have to understand that other states are running businesses as well. Businesses are increasingly ingenious with employment and payment strategies. This amendment will not protect the payroll tax revenue base in the longer term. It is a stopgap measure and, really, this bill should be addressing the proposal of an effective replacement of a negative tax altogether. Realistically, we are in a competitive environment with other states. A lot of their debt structures are far better than ours. We have to understand that sweetheart deals—for example, on the issue of a headquarters—will only increasingly lead to further sweetheart deals and they will be on issues of payroll tax and maybe even on land tax.

Labor governments around Australia cannot offer cash because, after 10 years of Labor government, there is no cash. I think the Treasurer needs to get the bean counters to start sharpening their pencils and find methods of driving efficiencies and revenue increases using the GST. The GST is hard to avoid irrespective of the state in which the business is domiciled; people accept it, it is a growth

tax, it is an input tax, it is a once-only tax and it is 10 per cent. Payroll tax is none of these things. Whilst it is not nickels and dimes—and I think that is the point that the Treasurer was trying to make earlier—by and large the state needs to be looking at growing revenue by 50 per cent over the next 10 years, otherwise we will be in severe trouble.

The changes to the GST as proposed in the bill today are minor. The GST is where the real horsepower of the state revenue growth is and it must be looked at constantly. Strangely, but not without any level of surprise, the Treasurer has decided to go down through the list of potential sources of other means of stamp duty equivalents and can shamelessly say that he has harnessed as many as he can from every area. None of these taxes is justified in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* historic document of principles. They are not justified because they are negative taxes. These types of duties add nothing to process; they obstruct and penalise process. In doing so, as time goes by there will be an ever-increasing need to address both existing legislation and the areas of definition, as people legitimately seek to exempt themselves from these areas. Currently, the list is not extensive, but it includes everything from insurance duty on life insurance to revising insurance duty on accident insurance relating to workers compensation.

In fairness, there are a number of extensions and exemptions that have been detailed, mainly in relation to property and especially in relation to transfer duties. The balance is driven, obviously, by the need to have a sting in the tail and that is basically for the self-assessor—who is usually a registered duty agent or assessor—and the expansion of the circumstances in which the Commissioner of Stamp Duties may suspend or cancel the assessor's registration under the Duties Act 2001. This expansion then leads to the two progressive steps that have been allowed for in the amendment—which are to be supported—and they are to introduce a new exemption from transfer duty and to facilitate the restructuring of 'top hatting', which has been mentioned today, certain stapled securities that meet the requirements of the Commonwealth capital gains tax rollover relief and other conditions. There is also the extension of transfer duty exemptions for a managed investment scheme property transfer between a responsible entity and a primary custodian to include transactions involving acquisitions of trust interests.

There is a variety of lesser changes that also would seem to be beneficial and may apply in some minor situations. They will benefit some individuals. The exemptions granted to charitable institutions have been given some qualification—that being that the property granted exemption must be used within six months and continue to be used for such purposes for at least a year to maintain the exemption. A discretion has been allowed for the commissioner, which is very good. Previously, he was not allowed discretion regarding his rules. That discretion has been retrospectively applied back to 1 March 2002 for transfer duty. I think a lot of people will be breathing a massive sigh of relief. I support the actions taken here and I think that the shadow minister has spoken adequately and addressed those changes.

I would now like to speak to the issue of the first home owners grant and the reduction from \$1 million to \$750,000 in line with the changes made in the other states. I think this is a good idea but, in the context of the Gold Coast, many first home owners there would not normally be deemed to be first home owners. They are mainly immigrants, they are mainly cashed up and they have owned homes previously. But under the Australian terms, they are defined as first home owners. They have taken advantage of the gap in the legislation. That has led to unfair competition in the second home market, where young people seeking a bigger home for their growing family are facing unfair competition in the market. Unfortunately, the extra bonus makes a huge difference and it can result in a house purchase going to another person ahead of a local needy family. That is unfair and this action will level the playing field a little.

Having said that, the average mortgage for a homeowner on the Gold Coast and in my electorate of Gaven is \$450,000. Currently, first home owners under the current, more productive bonus are estimated to be 50 per cent in default. This is very worrying and, with an average five per cent decrease in valuations—as is noted in today's *Courier-Mail*—many will be pushed over the edge. So I am worried that we might see homeless families as a result of mortgage defaults. That is socially and economically bad for a society.

In general, I think there has been a lack of insight regarding the \$1 million. That is not a great deal for a home in a growth area, particularly now that that price is almost the norm in New South Wales, particularly in Sydney and Melbourne. Units are routinely changing hands for these amounts and homes equally. The justification of the reduction of the cap from \$1 million to \$750,000 is really unclear. Numerically, that is a very low number of applicants. Therefore, I think the number needs to be looked at. I hear that it was raised as an issue today. I think it needs to be understood that there are some people who are not genuine first home owners but, equally, those numbers should be looked at and a sensible change made.

The remaining major issue in this bill is the change to Suncorp via the State Financial Institutions and Metway Merger Facilitation Act. In simple terms, the company will be allowed to appoint directors as and when it wishes, specifically with no restrictions on their domicile. Previously under the privatisation there was no minimum number of directors required. The reasons given for the change are difficult to understand. Having said that, I am a federalist and I believe that any Australian should be able to apply. Equally having said that, for those who are possibly not Australians, this entity was started by TJ Ryan in 1915 for the benefit of all Queenslanders and should remain so.

Other issues have been comprehensively covered by most of the previous speakers. About 90 per cent of all Queenslanders believe that we must keep our railways, ports, forests and motorways in Queensland under public ownership. Once an asset is sold it cannot always be bought back. We are merely the custodians of our common heritage. Every time a revenue bill is introduced it follows that there will be close examination of revenue streams and there will be even closer examination in terms of microscopic examination of strategy and what will be achieved out of it. We will be looking to see whether the current Labor government can look beyond an electoral cycle of three years. As the Bligh Labor government and previous premiers such as Beattie have demonstrated, they cannot look beyond the three-year cycle. It is inventing crisis after crisis, whether it is true or not, and proposing solutions to the problems it alone created. Today's *Australian Financial Review* states—

The Bligh government's dogged refusal to hold a dual track process for privatising QR is deeply troubling. It flies in the face of competitive processes. Over the longer term the Bligh government risks biting the hand that feeds it royalties and it frustrates the coal companies that are planning to bid for QR's valuable coal tracks.

Overall the *AFR's* assessment is that in its years of government Labor's ineptness has failed to deliver on infrastructure. It wasted money, it waited too long and it only did the lesser tasks. The current privatisation proposal is the poorest possible method and by any definition it must not go ahead. No-one supports it and in this market we should be buyers or holders, not sellers.

**Mr MESSENGER** (Burnett—LNP) (4.11 pm): The Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill was introduced into this place on 10 March—barely two weeks ago. It qualifies for debate in this chamber by the skin of its legislative teeth. That always makes me and those members on this side of the House suspicious. The fact that this legislation was brought into this place at breakneck speed by the worst Treasurer in our state's history and a Premier who is fast giving women in politics a bad name gives me even more reason to approach this legislation with caution.

I congratulate the shadow Treasurer on his wise and accurate assessment of the legislation before the House. The Treasurer has named 11 acts that will be amended by this bill. I do not propose to go through all of those acts. I thought it might be worthwhile to share with the House the definition of the word 'revenue'. It is a noun. It is defined as 'the entire amount of income before any deductions are made'. That is one definition of revenue. A more appropriate definition of revenue for those in the Labor Party is 'a bigger trough for those opposite and their corrupt mates to stick their snouts into'.

I managed to get staff from the Parliamentary Library to do some research on Queensland taxation revenue, and I thank them for their very thorough research that I will share with members today. It compares the year 2007-08 to 2008-09. Looking at the big picture, total Queensland taxation revenue in 2008-09 was around \$10 billion. In the previous year, 2007-08, it was about \$9.5 billion. Going down the list of duties, transfer duties have increased by 5.8 per cent in 2007-08 from around \$2.9 billion to \$3.14 billion. Vehicle registration duties rose a massive 36.3 per cent from \$380 million to \$518 million in 2008-09. There was a 4.4 per cent rise for insurance duties from \$386 million to \$403 million. There was a large decrease of 95 per cent in mortgage duties from 2007-08 to 2008-09: \$335 million down to \$15 million. Other duties leapt 133 per cent from \$6 million to \$14 million. That resulted in total duties of about \$4 billion—a 0.3 per cent increase from 2007-08 to 2008-09.

While speaking to the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I note that gaming machine taxes and levees increased by eight per cent from 2007-08 to 2008-09 from \$535 million to \$578 million. There was a 20 per cent increase in the health services levy from \$39 million to \$47 million and a four per cent increase in lottery taxes from \$202 million to \$210 million. There was a 2.7 per cent increase in wagering taxes from \$37 million to \$38 million, a 5.2 per cent increase in casino taxes and levees from \$58 million to \$61 million and a 6.3 per cent increase in Keno tax from \$16 million to \$17 million. Looking at other taxes, land taxes jumped a staggering 28.1 per cent from 2007-08 to 2008-09 from \$622 million to \$797 million—almost \$800 million. It will be very interesting to compare the figures from the previous years and the coming years. Motor vehicle registration went from \$945 million to \$991 million, a rise of 4.9 per cent. A rise of 5.7 per cent occurred in the fire levy from \$264 million to \$279 million. Community ambulance cover, which is mentioned in this bill, went from \$128 million to \$133 million in 2008-09, a rise of 3.9 per cent. Guarantee fees rose from \$84 million to \$98 million, a 16.7 per cent rise. Other taxes stayed relatively the same—\$64 million to \$65 million—making a grand total of \$10.106 billion or an increase between those two years of 5.8 per cent.

It is proper and relevant during debate on this revenue bill to remind this place of the state of our projected revenues. Put simply, we are broke. Those opposite do not have a plan to stop us from going even more broke. The question that those opposite fail to answer or do not want to answer is who will

pay back the debt. If those opposite manage to maintain their hold on the Treasury bench, of course it will be our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren. The first thing the government can do, if it wants to have an honest plan to pay back that debt, is to be honest about the size of the problem, yet we are not even seeing that. The reason this Premier and her government are being forced to compromise every traditional political value they have ever stood for in their entire political career is that they do not have another choice. The credit markets will further downgrade our already tarnished rating if the Premier fails to sell off the state's assets, and that of course would mean sudden political death for the Premier instead of this lingering, smelling, grimacing bunch of political bodies opposite who are somehow coming in here and putting on this facade of arrogance and haunting this place.

The government also needs to focus on economic growth, but how can there be economic growth in a state where families and small businesses are flogged with record increases in state taxes and charges? How are we expected to grow, except of course by relying on the mining industry? That is our saviour. The government is not looking after the primary industry sector at all. It tries to demonise that sector every step of the way. In fact, it is throwing red tape at it which stops growth and the creation of real jobs. Anyone can go out and borrow \$50 billion to create work, such as people painting rocks, but those jobs are not sustainable and will not benefit our children and grandchildren.

The markets know we have lost our credit rating; the people of Queensland know it; at home I have a cushion on my couch that knows it. The only people who seem to ignore it, with their arrogant dismissive gestures and spin, are those opposite. The excuse is always the GFC. They say, 'It's the GFC's fault.' As we have heard from many people on the opposition benches, before the GFC we had already spent \$1.5 billion more than we earned—the cupboard was bare—and we planned to borrow \$64 billion. By 2014 we will be \$85 billion in the red. I have been told that that means the state will have to find about \$100 million a day in interest. In the next couple of years we will have to find \$5 billion in interest payments alone. The Corrective Services budget is \$1.2 billion, so that is four times the size of the Corrective Services budget and about half the size of the Health budget in interest payments alone.

The member for Toowoomba North interjected and said, 'What plan have you got? How are you going to get the money?' The first thing is to be honest about the size of the problem. Let us look at the corruption issue. How much has corruption cost Queensland? How much has Labor waste cost Queensland? We are going to target Labor corruption and waste. When talking about Labor waste, how could I not mention the \$270 million Traveston Dam. What about the Premier's husband's \$200 million department? What has it done? It has come up with a form called the I-don't-know form. I think it was called the sustainability form, but no-one fills it in now. The sole product of that \$200 million department is more red tape to tie up our businesses so that they become unproductive.

**Mr Bleijie:** It has been amended three times.

**Mr MESSENGER:** I take the interjection from the member for Kawana. It has been amended three times. It is an absolute blight. Homeowners and real estate agents are tearing their hair out that something so silly could pass through this place with the approval of those opposite. The minister for the environment thinks that paying more money in taxes to Kevin Rudd will stop the climate from changing. What has happened to the ETS? The minister went to Copenhagen, where it all turned to custard. Then we found out that by paying more money to Kevin Rudd we really were not going to stop the climate from changing. We must thank Barnaby Joyce and Tony Abbott, because they have saved businesses and working families a \$20 billion tax. I wonder how many—

**Ms Jones** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Pitt): Order! Minister!

**Mr MESSENGER:** Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. I was being savaged by a chihuahua. When talking about Labor waste and corruption, I have to mention the Bundaberg ring-road. That \$40 million project blew out to \$100 million. What happened? How would the government operate in small business? If a manager or CEO estimated that a project would cost around \$40 million or \$50 million but then that figure doubled, they would be sacked. They would be thrown out. But what do we have? We have a transport minister who says, 'We have spent \$100 million on the Bundaberg ring-road.' In regional Queensland a road should cost about \$1 million to \$2 million per kilometre. This 15 to 19 kilometre road cost \$100 million.

Of course, not to disappoint the member for Everton, I have to mention the \$30 million that this government is spending on a desalination plant at Agnes Water that is not needed or wanted. Even if I could click my fingers and have that plant magically appear and be fully operational, the people would not want it because they have enough water. One has to wonder why a project such as that has such political projection.

**Mr Watt** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Please resume your seat. Member for Everton, please return to your seat if you are going to make comments. I do not need guidance from you either, Minister.

**Mr MESSENGER:** Let us turn to the asset sales. The Treasurer throws around our state money like the Deputy Premier throws around condoms at a university open day. Both Labor political activities create similar outcomes in our state's university dormitories and our state's Treasury department: loud gasps, moans and heavy breathing. This bill is another nail in the coffin of our state's public assets.

It is time that inside this chamber we heard the voices of reason and common sense being heard outside the chamber. It is worthwhile quoting what people in the real world are saying about the asset sales. I hear the groans, gasps and loud exhalations of those opposite. It is worthwhile repeating common-sense statements. One is as follows—

Again you have failed to publish that these assets are not owned by Anna Bligh, they are owned by the people of Queensland, and any sale of anything without the people's permission is invalid. I cannot go ahead and sell next door's house. Anna Bligh has no mandate, as I have never seen it or agreed to it. Anna Bligh knows she has blown it. She knows her career in politics is—

A word I cannot repeat in this chamber—

She knows the vast majority of voters cannot stand a bar of her or her antics. She is hanging on for all its worth just to make sure she can keep her snout in the trough and collect as much public funded super and perks as possible. To get her out of parliament house earlier would require a very strong straitjacket and a large bulldozer to do the job.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Members to my right, the member for Burnett has the call.

**Mr MESSENGER:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. In the short time left to me, I would like to draw the attention of the House to what the Treasurer says in relation to the bill. He talks about the first home buyers scheme. In the Burnett the first home owners are being forced to pay more in state government taxes and charges because of this government's inability to properly manage our public funds. The state government charges and the reduction of the 40 per cent local government infrastructure charges have caused Burnett developers to pay about \$20,000 per building block in taxes and charges. In Victoria the average amount is \$5,000. When our first home buyers are applying for their grants, do they know and appreciate the fact that this government's wasteful management of our public finances is causing them to pay more for their first home?

The Treasurer also says that the merger was aimed at enhancing the availability of banking finance and insurance services throughout the state by creating financial institutions that were able to use its well-known brands to offer a wide range of banking finance and insurance products in an increasingly competitive market. Just like the Treasurer, I would like to make some comments and observations about the availability of banking finance, especially when it comes to small to medium sized business that we must rely on to get us out of this financial hole. In a nutshell, the Burnett is doing it very tough in the current financial times because there is a credit squeeze that all banks, including Suncorp Metway, are responsible for. In his speech, the Treasurer said that on 28 October at Suncorp's annual general meeting shareholders passed a vote to amend the company's constitution to change the residential requirements that apply to Suncorp directors.

Frankly, I do not care where the manager of Suncorp comes from as long as he starts giving small to medium sized businesses an even break and shows some respect to long-term customers who have shown loyalty to the bank during the good times. For example, I was recently asked this question by a Burnett businessman: who would you rather owe money to—the bank or the Taxation Office? Which organisation would be more likely to behave in a decent, common-sense and compassionate manner? After talking to local Burnett businessmen, I am convinced that if I had to owe money to either of the two I would choose the Taxation Office. I may be wrong, but I am very interested to hear from as many small and medium sized businesses as I can about their banking and tax experiences.

I think what we are seeing now is a dangerous credit crisis and squeeze created by the big banks' very bloody-minded attitude to relatively small and minor breaches of loans. This credit crisis—and I believe it is a self-made credit crisis—is threatening the viability of many good small to medium businesses. It seems as though the big banks are making record profits but they are now becoming more miserly and mercenary than usual. For example, I spoke to a medium sized plant and heavy machinery hire operator who, like most businesses, had a diversity of incomes from property investments and also his workshop. This gentleman had built his business up from scratch and had been employing and training people for the last 40 years. He needs a break.

In closing, I ask this question of the Treasurer: how many businesses have gone bankrupt and how many jobs have been lost because Queensland businesses have been forced to pay payroll and land tax? It is time that this government also showed some compassion to our small businesses who need that break right now in the most dire of times. How many small businesses have gone bankrupt while waiting for this government to pay its bills? This government is not a good payer of its bills. It drags out the payment of its bills because it is going bankrupt.

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (4.31 pm): I rise to speak to the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I wish to address two areas without in any way trivialising the other amendments. The first one is fairly predictable, and that is the amendments to the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act 2009. This will be a further step in the privatisation of those assets that was brought before this parliament at the end of last year.

Whilst I do not have a cushion at home that knows the ins and outs of privatisation, I do have a lot of electors—residents who live in the electorate of Gladstone—who are vehemently opposed to this proposal. Only one person has said to me that they are in support of this proposal and that was a statement along the lines of, 'Oh well, I suppose if they've got to do it. They've got to be able to pay the bills.' Further conversation about issues like recurrent income from Queensland Rail coal freight certainly puts a different light on the considerations of that person. However, overwhelmingly, the feedback I have received in my electorate is 100 per cent opposed to the proposed privatisation, particularly of coal freight.

This bill also deals with employee security and the preservation of rights of transferred employees. At the risk of repeating myself, because I know that I have said this in this chamber before, I do not have confidence in the theoretically preserved rights of transferred employees. In a microcosm, we have seen the transfer of employees with Maritime Safety Queensland. At least one employee in my electorate came to me feeling betrayed by that process and feeling that their terms and conditions of employment certainly were not preserved and that they had a significant loss of employment conditions. That was discussed at some length with the minister of the day.

I again refer to the issue of the Suncorp Metway merger. The then Treasurer, Mrs Sheldon, and others in a meeting gave me assurances that people involved in Suncorp Metway would not lose their jobs and indeed that the service would grow and that protection would be given to those employees. After the privatisation there was a rationalisation of the branches because there were a significant number of branches across the banking sector when you looked at all of the entities that were amalgamated—that is, Suncorp Building Society, Suncorp Finance Ltd, Suncorp Insurance and Finance, QIDC and the Metway Bank. In particular, Suncorp and Metway had branches duplicated in some areas and at least one of those branches was often closed and there was not full employment for the employees.

I have grave misgivings about undertakings that are given, albeit legislatively, to preserve the rights and conditions of employees, because time has shown that those assurances may be able to be given in the short term but they are certainly not able to be given in the medium to long term. They cannot be sustained. Indeed, when those branches were closed and I raised it with the then Treasurer, Mrs Sheldon, her response at the time—and it was accurate; it certainly was not inaccurate—was that, as it was a private entity, she could not influence the longer term retention of those employees. That was, I think, a betrayal of those employees, and I believe that over time with the proposed privatisation of these assets employees will be affected. I acknowledge that the Premier has said that, with QR coal freight being privatised, more jobs will be created. I again stress that that was the mantra when Telstra was privatised. We saw, and we are still seeing, a significant loss of jobs—often thousands at a time—with Telstra and a corresponding diminution of service, particularly in rural and regional Queensland.

I have had to take note of the strength of opposition from the unions in my electorate. I would not say that my voting stance on things has always accorded with the unions. That would be a great falsehood. But I have been surprised at the strength of their feeling against this privatisation decision, given their long-term allegiance and support for the ALP and the decisions that the ALP has made. That in itself is very telling. More importantly than that, the mums and dads are the ones who have said to me that they are opposed to the privatisation. As other speakers have said, it is like selling the goose that lays the golden egg, because QR coal freight is one of the income-generating entities, particularly in my electorate. Let me make it clear that I am opposed to that privatisation, as I have been in the past.

The only other issue I raise is the small amendment in this bill to allow directors of the Suncorp Metway entity to not live in Queensland, however the managing director must ordinarily reside in Queensland. Again, without harking back too much, one of the safeguards that was put in place to ensure that Queenslanders were not disadvantaged by the privatisation of Suncorp Metway was that it would be enshrined in legislation that the managing director and directors would be required to reside here. That is no slight on the current Treasurer. He is making decisions in the current economic climate and in the current business climate. But it was a safeguard for the people of Queensland that is being dismantled in this bill. So in terms of assurances that are given in this place to members of the community who are significantly impacted by decisions that are made here—votes that are taken here—we can only have partial confidence that their interests are being looked after and that their future can be guaranteed.

On the basis of the concerns that have been expressed to me repeatedly in my electorate opposed to the sale, particularly of QR coal freight but also to the assets listed for asset sale in the past, I will be opposing this legislation. The argument has always been that there has to be revenue generated for new infrastructure for the state. I believed initially when this was being sold that the income was going to be used to pay down debt. The reality is that, from the point of view of my electorate, people work in industries that generate a great deal of income for this state and for this nation. They regularly say—and rightly so—that they deserve reinvestment of some of that revenue in the electorate in which it is generated. That is not occurring—certainly not sufficiently. But they do not support and remain vehemently opposed to the privatisation of these assets, and that part of the bill I will be opposing.



**Ms JARRATT** (Whitsunday—ALP) (4.40 pm): I rise in support of the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The ROLA Bill amends a variety of acts, with a view to clarifying operations of legislation, updating or correcting superseded terms or references and giving force to administrative arrangements, some of which are already in place.

One of the measures that has been raised by other speakers affects the quantum of the first home owners grant. This grant is well known for lending assistance to first home buyers to enter a market that, depending on the region or, indeed, the suburb one wishes to purchase into, can be quite a financial challenge. This is especially so in post global financial crisis days when banks and lending institutions are demanding larger cash deposits upfront to secure mortgages. In areas like Mackay, where mining and related industries have artificially inflated property prices, entering the housing market can be especially difficult. The first home owners grant is, in many ways, a godsend to those looking to purchase their first home in what would otherwise be an even more difficult property market.

Even given the high cost of available housing in places like Mackay, there is no circumstance that I can think of that would require a first home buyer to settle on a house costing more than \$750,000. I am sure my constituents would say that any person able to make repayments on a home costing, say, \$800,000 or more should not receive taxpayer help to fund the deposit. It is worth remembering the history of the first home owners grant, which on its introduction in the year 2000 had no maximum price attached to it. In January this year Queensland instituted a cap of \$1 million. To bring the scheme into line with New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, this legislation reduces that cap to \$750,000. This is both sensible and, I believe, reasonable.

Speaking briefly to another aspect of this bill, I come to the amendments to the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (Queensland) Act, which brings about the common-sense outcome of making this act redundant. Currently Queensland is the only jurisdiction that relies on an act of parliament to endorse regulations made under the Commonwealth's Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act. These amendments bring Queensland into line with other jurisdictions by removing the requirement for an act of parliament for Queensland to endorse Commonwealth regulation amending the goods and occupations that are exempt from the operation of the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Scheme. I believe this amendment will streamline processes, save time and therefore provide efficiencies, and allow greater participation for Queensland in the review process. With those few comments, I commend this bill to the House.

**Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (4.43 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The bill amends a number of revenue and financial statutes in Queensland, amongst them the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act 2009. This act facilitates the sale of a number of state owned assets, amongst them Forestry Plantations Queensland, Queensland Motorways Ltd, the Port of Brisbane Corporation, Queensland Rail's above- and below-rail coal network, and the Ports Corporation of Queensland's Abbot Point Coal Terminal.

The people of Queensland have made their feelings in respect of this proposal by the Bligh Labor government abundantly clear. They strongly oppose it. They oppose the sale of the state owned assets for a variety of reasons but, above all, because they are outraged at the duplicity and the dishonesty of Premier Bligh and Treasurer Fraser, who said one thing before the state election in March 2009 and did another after they had won another term on false pretences. For this duplicity and dishonesty, the Bligh government has lost the confidence and the trust of the people of Queensland.

The explanatory notes accompanying this bill state that these amendments facilitate the divestment of state owned assets by way of 99-year leases. The bill proposes to insert a section into the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act to deal with a number of issues relating to the change of status of government owned assets as a result of their divestment. As these entities will no longer be publicly owned, the bill proposes to insert a new section into the act to afford certain protections to the government and these entities. Without this new provision, it would appear such a change in ownership would otherwise trigger certain contractual rights as far as third parties are concerned where they may be required to give consent to the change of ownership.

I am particularly interested in this issue as it relates to the divestment by the government of Forestry Plantations Queensland. In 2006, Forestry Plantations Queensland took over from the former department of forestry within the department of primary industries as the manager of the Queensland government's softwood and hardwood forest plantations. The 2008-09 annual report of FPQ indicates that it presently has about \$1.17 billion in biological assets, being the trees themselves, on about 211,000 hectares of land. This is a significant amount of state owned land. The same annual report also indicates that the land those trees stand on is valued at about \$216 million.

FPQ carries out its forestry activities principally on crown land allocated for forest production purposes. FPQ is granted full and exclusive access to state plantation forests under a deed of profit à prendre to carry out its operations in accordance with the Forestry Act 1959. Only land controlled by Forestry Plantations Queensland is recognised as an asset on the balance sheet of Forestry Plantations Queensland in its annual report. However, FPQ pursues activities in hardwood plantation in joint

partnerships with private landowners. FPQ has established several thousand hectares of hardwood estate that are mainly planted on private land accessed through land rental agreements. Forestry Plantations Queensland pays these private landowners a quarterly rent in advance in return for their access to this land.

Approximately 25 years is required to produce a hardwood sawlog crop, and FPQ establishes an agreement with the landowner that legally separates the trees from the land. The question I wanted to pose to the Treasurer today is exactly what are the implications for the divestment by the Bligh Labor government of FPQ for private landowners who have signed 25-year contracts with FPQ to establish hardwood plantations on their properties? There are obviously some implications, otherwise clause 87 of this bill would not be necessary. Would the Treasurer be able to advise the House if there are any other contractual rights third parties are able to exercise arising from a change of ownership of a formerly government owned corporation? If landowners who presently have a contract with FPQ for the establishment of hardwood plantations on their properties will be deprived of the right to withhold consent to a change of ownership, does the Bligh government plan to provide any compensation to these landowners if they are disadvantaged as a result?

What are the implications for the lack of certainty these landowners have experienced or may experience in entering into these contracts with FPQ? Should everybody be cautious about entering into contracts with a government owned corporation in Queensland when the Bligh government is clearly prepared to legislate to deprive contractual partners of certain rights to withhold consent to a change in ownership of a state government owned entity with which they have a contract? This is an interesting question. I invite the Treasurer to comment on it and especially on why it may not compensate those landowners if they are subsequently disadvantaged as a result of a change of ownership of an entity with which they have a contract.

The other issue I wish to canvass is the poor timing of the divestment by the Bligh Labor government of FPQ. As I mentioned earlier, the biological assets of FPQ were valued in its 2008-09 annual report at about \$1.17 billion. However, the Bligh government ought to recognise that it may not realise a windfall of this magnitude given current market conditions in respect of plantation forestry timber or land available for lease for this purpose. The recent collapse of plantation forestry operations—namely, the managed investment schemes such as Timbercorp and Great Southern—has put thousands of hectares worth of plantation forestry product, that is the timber, on the market and thousands of hectares of forestry land on the market. This means that the Bligh government is looking to sell Forestry Plantations Queensland when there is a glut in the market of both plantation timber and land.

The disposal of FPQ is the first of the Bligh government's proposed divestments of government owned assets to be progressed against the express will of the people of Queensland. So far we have landowners with existing contracts with FPQ possibly being disadvantaged without compensation and the prospect of an asset being sold when there is a glut in the market for both plantation forestry product and land. This is typical of the utter mismanagement of the affairs of this state by the Bligh government. What other failures can the people of Queensland expect with the other asset sales to follow, including such prized publicly owned assets as our major ports and Queensland Rail?

**Mr DICKSON** (Buderim—LNP) (4.51 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010. What we have before us is legislation that addresses a whole range of revenue statutes. Buried amongst the amendments contained in the bill are amendments to the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act 2009—in other words, changes that will allow the government to proceed with its asset sale. Anyone would think that the sale of state owned assets requires just another administrative change like the many other changes outlined in the clauses in this bill.

The sale of state owned assets is the worst economic decision ever made by this state government. Selling off the farm to pay for debt is a desperate measure. Like the farmer selling off his farm, the government is depriving the next generation of the assets that should be theirs and that would provide income and security into the future. But at least the farmer could probably blame the drought or circumstances beyond his control. This government only has itself to blame. It had all of the boom years when revenue was pouring into government coffers. But what did it do? It spent money like there was no tomorrow. It ignored all of the sound economic principles. It did not plan for the inevitable—that is, that the good times would not last forever. This government did not plan for the future so now it is sneaking into legislation amendments that will let it sell off the farm. If this government is so bankrupt of good economic ideas that it jumps for the easy fix to its debt problems, I wonder whether it would manage the family farm in the same way. I am sure it certainly would not run the family farm the way it has run this government and this state.

We have already seen how those opposite manage privatisation. Look at what has happened with electricity and water. The former Premier assured Queenslanders that the sell-off of electricity retailing would not lead to higher costs. What a joke that turned out to be! Not only do we have higher prices but we have countless problems. Only yesterday the Energy Ombudsman was warning about the

shonky practices of door-to-door salesmen trying to sign up customers. New connections are not happening because customers have to talk to the retailer instead of directly to the power supplier. Then we have the issue of water. This is another great example of how this government manages privatisation. The Sunshine Coast council leads by example when it comes to good water management. It invested in infrastructure and created a strong, secure water supply for its ratepayers. Now the government has set up a one-way pipeline to deliver water to Brisbane from the coast. It has set up a separate water authority—think of all of the costs associated with that—and in the process it has taken away a major revenue stream of the council. What will the result of all of this be? It will be higher prices caused by a government's poor decision making and poor planning. Now it is going to sell off more key assets. The public float of Queensland Rail's rolling stock and track network is going to be a disaster for the biggest customer of QR—the coal industry.

Then we have the sell-off of Queensland Motorways. One does not need to be a genius to work out how the potential buyers will make that business pay. It will be through higher tolls. Just like electricity privatisation, the government will shrug its shoulders while the people of Queensland foot the bill again. Just like the people of the Sunshine Coast who are paying more for water thanks to the government's intervention, motorists will pay more under this measure. This is a crime that is being committed on the people of Queensland. We should not let this process pass us by. This government can stop this any time it feels like it. It just has to have the heart to listen to some of the people from whom it is taking these assets. Then there is the introduction of the 99-year lease option. That is a sneaky way of pretending that it is not really selling off the farm.

It is time this government had a good look at its plans to sell off Queensland assets. The unions and the people of Queensland have been making it very clear that they do not want to sell off the farm. The government needs to start listening and come up with better economic policies, because the way it is going about things, as the member for Burnett said earlier, it is going to send this great state of ours broke. Nobody in this House really wants to do that. The government needs to take responsibility for its actions and it needs to do it in an appropriate manner. It is like the banks which got away with blue murder until somebody pulled the reins. The government has to think about what it is doing to this state, because it is heading in the wrong direction.

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (4.56 pm): The Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill amends a large number of acts, and I want to speak about four aspects of this bill in particular. The first is the issue of the cap for the first home owners grant being reduced from \$1 million to \$750,000. Last year we saw the first home owners grant reduced from \$14,000 to \$7,000. In this case, we are looking at the cap on the value of homes being reduced from \$1 million to \$750,000. Depending on what part of Queensland one is in, a house valued at \$750,000 could be considered a very dear home, but in some of the more expensive parts of Queensland it could be considered a middle of the range home.

I agree that there does have to be a cap. Ultimately a cap has to be set at a certain amount. It was \$1 million and it is now being reduced to \$750,000. Obviously, the government had previously been able to afford it but it is no longer able to afford it and therefore it has reduced the cap from \$1 million to \$750,000. We have to bear in mind in determining these caps that first home buyers often do not have the total amount required to buy the home. Generally they have a deposit. We saw, particularly prior to the global financial crisis, many young couples who had perhaps graduated from university or developed in their profession and receiving substantial incomes buy homes that were expensive when they had a relatively small deposit. Sometimes the first home owner grant assisted them with some aspects of buying a home that they may not have been able to meet immediately. For example, it may have helped them with their legal costs or their stamp duty or ensured that they had the wherewithal for the bank to provide them with a loan.

The other aspect of the first home owner grant is that it not only helps young people to get into a house, which is important, it also stimulates the building and construction industry. Some of the major employers in most areas are the builders, contractors and subbies. They certainly are in Toowoomba and the surrounding area. It is important to keep a certain turnover of housing. There can be times when there is a lot of commercial work—and there is certainly a lot of commercial work around now. However, in a few months time we will see the completion of all the schools and libraries funded under the federal government's package. Suddenly, what has been a very large commercial construction program will cease and builders everywhere will be looking for alternative work for their staff and subbies. The first home owner grant has always been something that not only assists people in getting their first home but also provides for employment. I think it is something we have to consider carefully.

I know that \$750,000 appears to be a large amount for a house. Certainly in Toowoomba it would be getting towards the top of the range. In other parts of the state—around the capital cities, in some of the coastal areas and so on—that can represent quite an expensive home. The cost is partly driven, of course, by the price of land. It is not something in this bill that we are opposing, but I make that particular comment.

Another aspect of this bill deals with Suncorp, as it is called now. It relates to a resolution of a meeting of shareholders applying to directors. That resolution requires that only the managing director of Suncorp be ordinarily a resident of Queensland. I know that this bill is responding to the wishes of those people who voted at that particular meeting. One of the things about Suncorp is that its business has traditionally developed from within Queensland and it has expanded over recent times. It has had a very strong Queensland base. Much of that Queensland base is based on insurance.

We are a state that is subject to the vagaries of climate such as floods and cyclones, and we have seen all of those recently. I would think it would be important for an organisation such as Suncorp to have Queensland expertise within its board, particularly with regard to understanding the ebb and flow of insurance and understanding the climate of this state and the things that have to be insured. There must be some great corporate experience in the minds of a number of senior Queensland people who have worked in Suncorp or who have association with the insurance industry or the state generally. I would think it would be important for them to maintain some expertise. I do note that Suncorp has employed a CEO who has been getting around the state and attending various meetings. He does have some links with Toowoomba and was educated at the University of Southern Queensland. Hopefully, that Queensland expertise will be of benefit to the company.

There are also aspects in the bill dealing with the Payroll Tax Act. I would like to join with some of my colleagues who have spoken about payroll tax. I recognise how all the different components of taxation go towards our state income. However, if anything is a tax on people expanding a business, it is payroll tax. Whilst there is a threshold under which people do not pay payroll tax, once you hit that limit it is a great disincentive to businesses that are growing and employing people. Depending upon where the bar sits, usually once a business grows to around 18 to 20 employees it starts to hit the payroll tax threshold.

Someone I know in Toowoomba has built up a stock and station agency. It is a very difficult and demanding business. He expanded that business throughout the Darling Downs and the south-west to what it is today: a successful business. He told me how hard it was to grow and develop that business and employ people—whether it be people who work in the offices of all of the branches they establish, whether it be auctioneers at the saleyards or whether it be stockmen working in the saleyards, travelling merchandise salesmen or insurance people. He said it was very difficult to grow that business and ensure they made enough money every week to pay their 18 or 20 staff. As he decentralised the business into different country towns and faced the issue of payroll tax, he said it was like hitting a wall. Suddenly he felt that he was penalised for being successful and for doing something for the region and the state. He felt he was slugged because he had grown the business to that extent.

I think payroll tax is something that should always be kept in mind. If anything is a deterrent to employment and to small businesses growing into medium sized businesses, decentralising and being of real value to our state, it is payroll tax.

**Mr Shine:** What would you replace it with?

**Mr HORAN:** I made the point at the outset. I made the point that all of these taxes are different components of the income of the state. I am not saying we should tear it away or whatever, but we should always recognise that—with issues like the GST or the growth tax—whenever there is an opportunity to examine a form of taxation that can provide for a stronger state in terms of private businesses growing, in terms of people being employed and in terms of decentralisation, that is the tax that should be looked at. I know that government on both sides have often looked at it simply in terms of the level of the bar. That is, can the bar be raised so that businesses can get a few more people under the bar before they move over that threshold of having to pay payroll tax on top of all the other registration fees, charges, rates and costs that they have to pay?

One of the other acts amended by this bill is the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act. Also associated with that is the Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act. Both of these acts relate to the disposal, or the privatisation, of assets by the Bligh Labor government. What we have seen over the past eight or so years is one of the most disgraceful examples of financial management of Queensland that we have seen in the history of this state. As has been said many times, when we entered the global financial crisis and even a couple of years before the election, we were facing a predicted debt of \$65 billion. We found out after the election that the debt held by this government and its corporations was going to be \$85 billion by 2012—and that has been revised to \$84.5 billion in the midterm review. The bulk of that \$85 billion—\$65 billion—was accumulated prior to the global financial crisis, at a time when this state had some of the best years in its history.

How has this debt come about? Much of it has come about through wanton waste. There have been examples given of the Traveston Dam. Hundreds of millions of dollars were wasted on that particular issue. There was also the waste on the western corridor recycled water pipeline, which ran about \$1 billion over budget. It was a project that was rushed into, that was panic stricken and panic driven. Both the Treasurer and the infrastructure minister in charge of that came into this parliament making statements about when it would be finished. So then everybody knew the government was over a barrel and had to get the project finished on time. Some of the examples of costs in that particular project are absolutely disgraceful.

Any private company which had cost overruns and which had engaged in some of the wanton waste that occurred on that project would be run out of town. Anyway, the end point of it all is that the people of Queensland and their children face \$85 billion of debt, which amounts to somewhere in the order of around about \$13 million or \$14 million per day in interest, which has to be found every day. So every day the Treasurer gets up and puts his feet in his slippers—seven days a week—he has to think, ‘Where’s \$14 million in interest coming from?’

But that is only part of the story because, on top of that, all debt has to be repaid. Eventually, that money has to be repaid. This debt will be a burden on the people of Queensland, their children and their grandchildren for decades and decades to come. It is often said that if you do not control debt then debt controls you. We are seeing debt controlling what this government is able to do or is not able to do. Debt is the reason this government has been forced to sell income-earning assets such as the Brisbane port; the best income-producing area of Queensland Rail, that is, the coal freight lines; the forest plantations, which have earned good income; and the motorway tolling system. Just a couple of years back we saw this Labor government sell off three other income-earning assets. The government sold off the Mackay Airport, the Cairns Airport and its 12 per cent share in the Brisbane port. They were all income-earning assets. Once they are sold they are gone and the income they generated has gone forever.

Throughout the era of the National Party government leading to the Goss government one of the principles that made Queensland a financially sound state was to fund social assets out of budget surpluses. The budget was worked constructively so that there was a surplus to pay for the social assets that we must have, such as our schools and our hospitals that are so important. They should be funded in that way. But to sell off income-earning assets, as happened under the Labor government under Premier Beattie and Deputy Premier Anna Bligh, to build social infrastructure that does not provide a return means that you are selling off that which can fund hospitals, which can fund the surplus, which can provide the funds to pay for any moderate debt that the government has. Those assets are gone forever. The income that they produce has gone forever. Now we are having to sell more assets—this time prime assets—to try to deal with this massive mountain of debt.

Not only that, some of the assets that are being sold are themselves loaded up with debt. Owing to the financial mismanagement of this state government, over the past few years government corporations have been loaded up with debt. They have been taken to the highest level of the barometer so that not only are those government corporations repaying debt that has been loaded on to them but also they are forced to pay a dividend to the government. That is what is for sale in some instances—institutions that are loaded up with debt and which also have an obligation to pay a dividend to the state.

So we are selling off these assets. Their value is not the amount they might be worth, because they are heaped up with debt. On top of that, the government has taken some pretty sneaky action, such as increasing the toll so that the motorways can be a little bit more attractive to a potential purchaser. The motorways are not particularly attractive at the moment, because they are loaded up with debt. That is what this government has been doing during its many years of financial mismanagement.

It is the average Queenslanders who pays all of these extra costs that have been brought about by the debt. When the motorways get privatised, extra dollars will be heaped on to the toll. I ask members to imagine someone who lives around Ipswich or Goodna and who has to go over the Gateway Bridge to work every day or, in the course of running their small business, has to travel over the Gateway Bridge every day and back to go down to Beenleigh or the Gold Coast in the course of their business. They are going to pay an extra \$3 each way. That is \$6 a day on top of what they pay already. That is another \$30 a week that they have to get out of their pocket because the government has thrown this extra charge on to the tolls to make the motorways look more attractive to a potential buyer.

This sale of assets is disgraceful. It has been done as a fire sale. No wonder the people of Queensland are arcing up, because they are not seeing the money go from the sale of one income-earning asset to another income-earning asset that might see the state develop. If a rail line had been sold and that money was put into something else—be it a port, or other infrastructure, or another line that kept the state growing, or the money was put into things that were not able to be done by private enterprise—then people might accept some sort of argument for it. But in this case we are seeing income-earning assets sold and that income is going to be lost forever to this state.

The legacy of Labor for this state is that at the time of the next election there will be an \$85 billion or \$84.5 billion debt. There will be predicted budget deficits in the order of \$3 billion or more in that particular year. That is the legacy of this Labor government. I will never forget that during the last election campaign one voter, who had obviously voted for Labor, came up to me and said, ‘I don’t know what you’re going on about debt for.’ I asked, ‘Why is that?’ She said, ‘Oh, its only government debt.’ I said, ‘You have to pay the government’s debt because the government’s debt is the people’s debt.’

The people of Toowoomba are paying another 10c a litre for their fuel. They are paying the dearest registration fee for their cars in Australia. That fee used to be the cheapest in Australia. In the past three years electricity prices have gone up by about 50 per cent. Gas charges have gone through the roof—pensioners are unable to pay for their gas—because the government sold off its gas arm. It

was out of money, so it sold off its gas arm. Water charges are going through the roof, because the government has put in place a three-tiered system in which it has control of the wholesale system and the pipeline system. We are seeing charges going up all the time. It is the people who endure the pain for the waste, the mismanagement, the debt and the deficits that this government has delivered.

I agree with our shadow minister that this is one section of the bill that should be opposed. We oppose this privatisation—the sell-off of our income-earning assets. I look forward to supporting the shadow minister.

**Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (5.16 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 before the House, which was introduced by the honourable the Treasurer. The bill amends various revenue statutes, including the First Home Owner Grant Act 2000, the Community Ambulance Cover Act 2003, the Land Tax Act 1915 and the Payroll Tax Act 1971. At the outset, I want to say that I will be supporting this legislation before the House, but I will outline some concerns.

We all know that this government has gone bust on the back of a mining boom. In 12 years, the Beattie-Bligh Labor governments have squandered the state's budget bottom line, which had been injected with a record amount of mining royalties and GST revenue. State debt has continued to spiral out of control. That has subsequently cost the state our AAA credit rating and has ensured that each Queenslander now pays \$1.2 billion each year in interest payments as a result of Labor's mismanagement of the state's finances. That is \$85 billion in debt and Queenslanders pay \$1.2 billion in interest payments each year. We had one of the biggest mining and GST royalties in Australia and we now have a AA credit rating.

As outlined by the shadow Treasurer, the member for Clayfield, the LNP is opposing those clauses of the bill that relate to the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act 2009. These amendments pertain to the grossly unpopular asset sales program that was initiated by this government in an effort to recover the ballooning budget bottom line, thanks to the economic mismanagement of Labor governments over the past 12 years. These asset sales are nothing more than fire sales. The government claims to the people of Queensland that this is all part of a broader economic strategy. There is no economic strategy in this; the point of the matter is that the government, through the incompetence of the Premier and the Treasurer—and the Premier was the Treasurer during the time of the Beattie government—went bust in a boom. They are incompetent in the mismanagement of our state finances. There is nothing intelligent or strategic about the sale of these money-making assets. It is simply to pay a debt that should not have been incurred in the first place.

Only two weeks ago we were reminded of how unpopular the asset sales program is across the state and with the trade union movement in particular as its members marched outside this parliament. The Prime Minister is so concerned that the state government's unpopularity will translate into a swing against federal Labor at the upcoming federal election he orchestrated the cancellation of the Queensland State Labor conference of 2010. Senior Labor ministers have also come out disagreeing with the way the state Labor government is dealing with Queensland assets. What else would one expect from one of the most unpopular government policies of the century from the most unpopular member of this place?

**Mr Roberts:** How is the Leader of the Opposition's popularity rating going?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The Leader of the Opposition's popularity is one of the highest in opposition. How is the Premier's popularity rate going?

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take the interjection from the honourable the Attorney. What is your rating? What are you polling, Attorney? We all know what is happening here. The only leadership that has to be discussed in this place is the Premier's leadership, not the opposition's.

**Mr Robertson** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take the interjection from the Minister for Natural Resources. Two weeks ago in this place he introduced a piece of legislation and then came in and amended it 60 times. Do not let me remind him of that incompetence. When we are talking about incompetence in Treasury, let me not remind him of that.

I will get back to the bill. The bill relates to the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act 2009. This part of the bill will not be supported by the LNP as it is a direct result of the deceit of this government in the aftermath of the state election last year. Changes to the Duties Act 2001 regarding 'top-hatting' relief for the property industry will enable Queensland to continue to be internationally competitive in a global economy. It will also reduce compliance costs in terms of auditing and financial reporting and management fees for the responsible entities. With the changes included in this legislation now applying to a single entity rather than for each head entity, Queensland will continue to be increasingly attractive to foreign investment. I am happy to support this exemption which greatly supports the Queensland economy.

I would like to address the component of this amendment bill that relates to the First Home Owner Grant Act 2000. The bill before the House reduces the cap on the value of homes on which the grant is payable from \$1 million to \$750,000 to align with the caps in other jurisdictions and to allow the sharing of first home owner grant information with the Commissioner of Taxation under reciprocal arrangements. This is an extension of the federal Labor government's socialist agenda of repealing middle class welfare by means testing the baby bonus and continually trying to legislate changes to the private health insurance rebate. This provision of the bill is Queensland Labor's attempt at getting in on the act.

What puzzles me is how the Bligh government can determine those in the community who should be encouraged to purchase their first homes and those who should not. When are those opposite going to come to the conclusion or the realisation that socialism just does not work?

**Mr Fraser:** When are you going to come to the conclusion?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I came to the conclusion that socialism does not work based on Labor's 12-year history in government. We can clearly see it now with the debt of the Rudd government. The problem is that in Queensland and all across Australia the socialists get into power, they send the country and the state broke and then the conservatives—in this case the Liberal National Party—will have to get back into power and reduce the burden on each Queenslanders that has been placed on them by this government as a result of its 12 years of mismanagement of finances.

The purpose of the first home owner grant is to encourage the purchase of homes by those who have never purchased property before. The Australian dream has long been regarded as the ability of Australians to own and live in their own home. My fear as a state representative and as a parent is the increasing difficulty on the part of current and future generations of Queenslanders in being able to afford to live that Australian dream. Although I acknowledge that the grant has some impacts on the market, its underlying premise is to encourage more Queenslanders to save for and purchase their own home. As the youngest LNP member of this House, I can say that many of my friends are in the current generation who are struggling to buy their first home. I know many people who have made use of the first home owner grant to do so.

It has always been my fundamental belief that the government should encourage people and not restrict them. This First Home Owner Grant Act amendment is nothing but government restriction, which I most certainly dislike. People should not be punished or left out of a scheme because of their ability to afford a first home regardless of the price. Reducing the cap is reducing the incentive for some Queenslanders, the only aim being to comply with other states in Australia. Just because it may be in place somewhere else does not mean that it is good practice and certainly cannot be considered as fair.

I support the provisions of the bill that allow for the former publicly owned company Suncorp to have the restrictions removed that would allow it to move its headquarters to Sydney and enable Suncorp to amend its company constitution's requirement that the company director be a resident of Queensland. While I always support Queensland jobs, Suncorp is not a Queensland government entity and therefore the Queensland government should not impose regulations that restrict the growth of the company both nationally and internationally. Once again, I support less government restriction in the economy. It is interesting to see how the government wavers between government control in this measure as opposed to the First Home Owner Grant Act amendments. Consistency is clearly not its speciality or indeed an ability of this government.

We on this side of the House understand that the Queensland public has lost faith in this government. It sneakily went to the 2009 state election with no mention of its intention to sell off some of Queensland's best publicly owned assets. Then once re-elected it went on its way enacting its asset sales program in the hope that by the next election the anger in the community would have subsided. Almost one year on from that announcement Queenslanders have not forgotten the government's grossly deceitful revenue raising that went against all fundamental policies that the Labor Party holds dear. I commend the bill to the House with the reservations that I have outlined.

**Mr DOWLING** (Redlands—LNP) (5.26 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 as introduced by the honourable the Treasurer. It is a bill which amends 11 other bills. I will not be speaking to each of them, as most of the debate has been heard in the House, but I will talk to a few of the key areas. On reading through the explanatory notes, something that sent a message to me, and I believe will send a message to Labor's heartland, is that clauses 82, 83, 84, 90, 91 and 92 amend certain sections to facilitate the transfer of employees' assets, instruments and liabilities from and to the state in connection with the declared projects. Those clauses amend certain sections to facilitate the transfer of employees. They are by and large Labor members—Labor's rank and file. They are union members who have been sold out.

That small paragraph in the explanatory notes sums it all up. It is so well hidden in this document that it leapt out at me. It is saying that we are selling off our railway workers, our forestry workers, our port workers and our motorways personnel as if they do not exist. Worse than that, within that one simple paragraph it says that we are getting rid of the assets—selling them, privatising them, disposing

of them, removing them, transferring them. Whatever language is used, at the end of the day it is taking the assets that have been bought and paid for by Queenslanders many, many times over and selling them back to them. It is nothing but a complete and utter sham.

The myths versus facts brochure that came out articulated that these five entities are minor—that they are small businesses that tipped in only \$320 million profit last year. Last time I checked, profit meant after the debt was serviced and all debtors were paid. To still have \$320 million that this government is prepared to throw away is farcical. All the way through we have opposed the sale of these assets. Queenslanders will not forget that when they go to the polls. I am sure the Treasurer would love to find \$320 million out of thin air that he could invest somewhere. I would certainly look forward to it being invested in Redlands.

The bill amends the Land Tax Act 1915. Only some 14 days ago in this House we discussed the Valuation of Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. At that time I took a leap of faith and, during my speech on that legislation, I speculated that—

What this legislation will do in my electorate is see a most significant increase in valuations, not a downward trend as has been hinted at by the government. The Redland City Council area has not been valued for over five years. It would be a brave speculator who would contemplate that the values may go down after five years without land valuations.

I went on to say that the impact from that would jeopardise jobs in retail, property development and the building trades. To put that in perspective, in the Redlands retail accounts for 17 per cent of all residents' jobs. That is over 5,500 jobs. During that speech I also mentioned the fact that under Labor everything has been going up—electricity charges, water, registration, fuel prices—so why would land tax and land valuations be any different?

The land valuations are in. They started arriving in letterboxes today and, I suspect, yesterday. They prove my prediction. I can give the House some examples. Some angry landowners have taken the time to write to me and the two other state members for the Redlands, the member for Capalaba and the member for Cleveland. They too will have received this email and, as I was, they will be quite shocked at the change in valuations. One example outlined in the email is of a corner strip shopping centre which was valued last year at \$1.25 million which has now jumped to \$3 million.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr DOWLING:** I take the interjection. The valuation that was set five years ago was the valuation that was used last year, so it has jumped from last year's valuation of \$1.25 million to \$3 million. I repeat that this is significant because retail is such a big employer in my community. The Victoria Point Shopping Centre has increased in value from \$3.7 million last year to \$8.4 million this year, based on a five-year-old valuation. The small medical practice jumped from \$580,000 to \$810,000. The adjoining shopping centre jumped from \$9.5 million to \$20 million in land tax. I will read the salient points of this email, which states—

These 2 increases alone increase our annual tax bill by over \$100,000 ...

Again I have no issue in paying my fair share of tax however it makes it difficult to run a business when your costs rise so dramatically—we estimate that our rate and land tax liability will increase by nearly \$500,000pa. Traditionally a rise in valuation would be accompanied by a reduction in the taxation rate—however this will not be forthcoming. The land tax payable on behalf of the Redland Bay Shopping Centre ... calculates at the new valuation at \$45,000pa. We receive a little short of 400k net rent i.e. the land tax is over 15% of our net rent.

Clearly that is not an encouragement for small business. It is not an encouragement for anyone who would seek to invest in Queensland. If the mantra continues to be jobs, jobs, jobs, this is not the way to go about it.

I turn to the issue of selling off assets. Members on the other side ask where we stand on things and what our policy is, but quite clearly their policy is no longer to be the party that represents the worker or the union rank and file. No longer do they care about employees and no longer do they recognise the fact that Queenslanders already own those assets. Queenslanders paid for them and Queenslanders worked hard and provided for them, and now this government sees fit to steal from them and resell the assets as something that are somehow newly available and newly acquired. Clearly, the government cannot rob from Peter and sell to Paul and get away with it continuously. Its members will turn on it, and I look forward to that day.

**Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (5.34 pm): I rise to address the government's Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010. I note that the bill amends the following Queensland revenue statutes: the Community Ambulance Cover Act 2003, the Duties Act 2001, the First Home Owner Grant Act 2000, the Land Tax Act 1915, the Payroll Tax Act 1971 and the Taxation Administration Act 2001. The bill also amends the GST and Related Matters Act 2000, the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act 2009, the State Financial Institutions and Metway Merger Facilitation Act 1996, the Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990 and the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (Queensland) Act 2003. I wish to commend the shadow Treasurer and member for Clayfield for his work in scrutinising this bill and for his amendments that seek to improve the bill.



During the recent debate on land valuation, I mentioned the blood thirst that this state government has for taxes. I compared the government to the blood-sucking mutants of the Will Smith movie *I am Legend* and how this state government is draining the lifeblood out of Queensland. Like the land valuation bill, this revenue bill needs to be understood in the light of the government's failure to manage the state's economy and its need to increase its revenue through increased taxation. The 'tax-them-to-death' policies of this Labor government have cost jobs, impacted on small and medium business viability, and hurt mum and dad investors. Instead of being more prudent with expenditure, this government continues to look for every opportunity to feed its tax addiction.

As I have said before in this House, this government loves taxes. It looks for new and expanded revenue streams via taxation. It loves high taxes, big taxes, new taxes, expanded taxes, lifting taxes, sneaky taxes, heavy levies, increased tolls, weird taxes like the ETS and creative transport taxes like congestion taxes. The Premier has been found guilty of kicking Queenslanders when they are down; of that there is no doubt. We see hikes in electricity prices, car registration, boat registration, trailer registration, a petrol tax and a hike in land tax, and that is particularly the case in the Redlands as correctly outlined by the member for Redlands. Recently we have even seen cases of retrospective payroll taxes on small businesses. I will comment more on that later.

I will concentrate my very brief comments on three aspects of the bill, not because there is not a lot more to address in it but because I acknowledge the fine speeches of other members of the LNP who have spoken before me. I recommend the shadow Treasurer's speech as a more comprehensive treatise of this bill. The three areas I will focus on are land tax, payroll tax and asset sales as addressed in this bill. Firstly with regard to land tax, during the debate on the land valuation bill the government performed a last-second gold medal winning backflip. Succumbing to the great pressure applied by property industry groups, the community in general and the opposition, the government moderated its disastrous bill. I highlighted three cases in the Redlands where businesses were already hurting from the government's policies and the pain was expected to increase. Since then, Redlands landowners have started to receive their new valuations and they are horrified. Some businesses are bracing themselves for a 100 per cent increase in their land taxes, up to \$100,000 and, in fact, more in one case already reported accurately by the member for Redlands.

Secondly with regard to payroll tax, I agree with the statement made by the shadow Treasurer that we need to look for ways to remove impediments to business and that reforming the payroll tax system is important. I welcome his approach. A few Brisbane small businesses recently contacted my office concerned about payroll tax issues. In two particular cases, small banking franchises have been unfairly hit with a bill for retrospective payroll tax. In both cases, those small bank franchises have between three and four employees. They are small operations and should not be grouped with their mother company for the purpose of payroll tax. In those cases this tax appears to be most unfair and of significant enough value for them to have to reconsider their employment situation. They have only three to four employees and are small banks. I have asked the Treasurer if he would look at their cases as ungrouped. Under the current rules they would be defined as ungrouped, but for a number of years they were defined as grouped. I have asked the Treasurer to look at that and ungroup them, as is most appropriate. They are only very small banking franchises in Brisbane.

Thirdly in relation to assets sales, I join with other LNP MPs and continue to oppose the sale of Queensland's assets. The majority of Queenslanders do not support these asset sales and at this particular time. I commend the shadow Treasurer's amendment in this regard.

**Mr HOOLIHAN** (Keppel—ALP) (5.40 pm): In speaking to the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I did only have a couple of small areas to mention, but it just occurred to me after listening to the succession of sycophants for the Leader of the Opposition that perhaps my grandfather was right. As I grew up, my grandfather said to me, 'Paul, there's one born every minute and it takes 60 years for them to die.' I said to him, 'Who's that grandad?' He said, 'Stupid people.' Then he went on to tell me that stupidity was not capable of being fixed; only poor education was capable of being fixed and that was by better education. I have to say that after listening to some of the people sitting in the LNP seats here today 60 years should be up for some of them.

This bill is about the protection of the revenue base. Most of the garbage that has been foisted on us today—those opposite have tried to sugar coat it—is that they would not support limited sales of assets. Yet we hear from the member for Redlands that we do not care about workers and employees. What does he think the provisions that are included in this bill—incidentally that they are going to oppose—do? They protect employees' rights. They protect employees' rights in relation to superannuation or if they are transferred to another entity.

We have not heard from them here today about the sale of assets like Ergon and Energex, because their proposal is not just to sell the contestable parts of the retail arm; it is to sell the lot. We have not heard about QBuild or other government entities. But we heard this morning from the Minister for Transport about a proposal to add a congestion tax on vehicles. Lo and behold, it is a proposal of the

LNP—quite an old proposal. But they attribute that to the Labor Party, and I suppose we will read about that tomorrow morning in the *Courier-Mail*. I got told the other day that I had not taken a swipe at them recently, so they will probably have something to say about me, too.

Let me deal with a couple of things that have been put to this House and I would like to deal with them specifically. The member for Gaven stood up here and said that we have had a GST for 12 years. I hope nobody in this House, particularly the LNP, takes any account of that. He must have taken his shoes off and lost count on his fingers because the GST commenced from 1 July 2000. It has not even been in for 10 years yet. I hope the numeracy of the others is better than his mathematics.

**Mr Horan** interjected.

**Mr HOOLIHAN:** You are not in your seat anyway. The member for Toowoomba South, who actually sits in front of me, Madam Deputy Speaker, did not even mention the second range crossing today. I am a bit worried. He has to work out how to pay for it.

The real interesting point was in response to an interjection by the Minister for Natural Resources. The member for Kawana was telling us that each Queenslander will pay \$1.2 billion per year in repayments and when the minister interjected, 'You're an idiot,' he accepted the interjection! I think that says it all. Anyway, to get back to the bill—that incidentally was in relation to the assets sales.

There are many members on the Labor side of the House who are not particularly happy to have to take that sort of action. It is a hard decision. It was a hard decision that was reached by many, many people and it will have to be carried out, unless there is some alternative available. But so far we have heard of absolutely no alternative.

This bill is about the protection of revenue. State revenue is gained mostly through stamp duty, payroll tax and land tax, or taxes on land. I would commend to everyone in this House to stop and think about the provisions in this bill that actually protect parts of that revenue. The member for Clayfield in his speech—which I found quite interesting; he was a little bit obscure about certain aspects—obviously has paid some attention to the actual financial implications of this bill, such as the riders on insurance policies. People say, 'I'm insured for \$100,000,' and that is what the premium is based on. But what about the extra premium that is paid when they say, 'We will pay you \$1 million if you get injured in an accident.' That gets brought under the act.

In relation to stamp duty, I was a practising lawyer when elected to this House and a registered self-assessor and it always intrigued me that there was no way of stopping self-assessors from making mistakes or helping themselves. At some time in my previous career, I acted as the receiver for a solicitor who had his office next door to the TAB. He had an awful lot of money that was paid into a trust. That money was stamp duty which actually managed to not find its way to the stamps office, and we had to go and find that money—and that took quite some time. This bill gives the commissioner of stamp duties, if he has any queries about moneys that a self-assessor is required to pay to the Treasury under the Duties Act, the right to suspend their right to self-assessment. That relates mostly to solicitors but some accountants have that right too.

I commend the totality of the bill to this House. Here is one thing that I want everyone to listen to. The member for Buderim, in his closing comments, said that we should take responsibility for our actions. Everything that this Labor government has done has been with the view to taking responsibility for our actions—that responsibility is for the moneys of this state which are for the protection of the people who live in this state. Hopefully that will continue to be protected, particularly from those on the other side of the House in the LNP who halve their numeracy every time they put their shoes on. I commend the bill to the House.

**Hon. DM WELLS** (Murrumba—ALP) (5.47 pm): This bill has many different aspects. I wish to speak to only one of those aspects and I wish to do that only in order to thank the honourable the Treasurer for his responsiveness in that he has acted in response to representation that I made some years ago actually to his predecessor in the portfolio but which was obviously passed on to him. Back in 2006 I wrote on behalf of a number of people who live in aged-care residencies in my electorate. Those people are in a particular form of tenure. Land is capable of being divided infinitely, as every property law student at every law school knows. In my electorate, and indeed elsewhere across the state, new forms of land tenure have been devised in order to maximise the benefit of the people who own these kinds of establishments.

I wrote in 2006 that the arrangement with the proponents of the retirement resort is that people pay for the purchase of the residency, and the purchase price is approximately the amount which people would expect to pay if they were going to be buying it freehold. In my constituent's case the sum was approximately \$300,000 back then. However, the title to the land is called a lease. These leases can be bought and sold on the open market. If my constituent decided to move interstate, for example, he would be able to sell for approximately the amount that he bought it. He is in no way different from a freeholder in very many different respects. In other words, what the company is able to do is to provide its customers with a title that looks and behaves like a freehold title but does not enable their customers to get the government benefits that the freehold title would have enabled them to get.

One of the things this bill fixes up is that if somebody under Queensland law today wanted to purchase some land for a home then they would get the appropriate rebate on the stamp duty. If, however, what they purchased was a lease then under our statute law they would not be entitled to the stamp duty rebate. As a matter of practice, for some years the department has been implementing a policy of rebating the stamp duty that they do in fact pay, but that is a generous courtesy which has been extended as a result of the decisions of successive treasurers. What this legislation does is make it a matter of law.

It is very appropriate, I think, that people like my constituents who live in aged-care residences where they have an agreement with a landlord that mimics a freehold should be entitled to the benefit of having a freehold, or at least having the benefits which would flow from a freehold. This is one of them. There are others. Of course, my constituents who live in these kinds of circumstances will be looking for other steps in this direction, but I would like to thank the Treasurer. He has been particularly responsive and particularly meticulous in relation to this matter. I commend the Treasurer, and I commend the bill to the House.

**Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development) (5.53 pm), in reply: I thank all members for their contributions. I particularly acknowledge the contributions, not only in this debate but also as being agents for change, of the members for Murrumba and Yeerongpilly, both of whom have made contributions in this debate towards addressing issues that existed in the law, in advocating for the law to change for the benefit of communities that they have represented in their electorates. The positive change that is brought about in the amendments that we see here today is representative democracy in action.

This is a bill that principally provides for a wide range of benefits. It legislates a series of benefits that have been for the most part administered in the past, which is a usual practice under the administration of revenue law. It also protects the revenue base in many respects where those issues that arise in a complex society and a complex economy also require reinforcement through legislative action at a time that is required.

There was a question about the timing for this. It simply relates to the efficient passage of such matters that are usually stored up together so that there are not consecutive amendments. There is no disbenefit from the operation of these administratively, principally when they are to the benefit of the taxpayer. When there is a requisite wellhead or a requisite critical mass, then they are formed into one bill. That was one of the questions that the shadow Treasurer asked during his contribution.

In relation to payroll tax, which some people have commented upon, it is true that there is a national harmonisation going on here. But one thing that we are not harmonising is that the lowest rate of payroll tax in Queensland remains. This is about avoiding the prospect of double taxation. This was national reform. Interestingly, Western Australia's Liberal government was one of the first to enact on this front reform that we announced and that was advised publicly some time ago to clarify the operation of the payroll tax regime as part of the national effort to harmonise the operation of payroll tax to ensure that compliance costs and compliance issues are reduced for businesses. This is part of that effort and, therefore, I think of broad benefit to the economy.

I acknowledge in particular by exception the contribution of a couple of members. We heard tripe from the member for Gaven, who banged on about payroll tax but of course provided no commitment. There is a great tradition in this place of members opposite many times raising the ills and the evils of every single tax but always stopping short of providing the next part of the equation as to whether or not they would amend it, change it, abolish it or do anything. They just like to be the reflectors of the criticism and never the proposers of a solution. It is not for them the burden of proposing an alternative. It is not for them the burden of proposing positive alternatives. Far be it for them to ever put forward their own policy. It is much better that they come in here and only ever decry the current circumstance in a way that I think represents the worst of base politics.

In that regard I also acknowledge the lunacy advanced by the member for Burnett in his contribution. Before I leave the member for Gaven, he made some remarks about Suncorp while indicating that he would be supporting the bill. I would refer him to the rather erudite explanation of the shadow Treasurer in that regard. He answered his own questions. I am sure the member for Gaven will be more than edified by a review of the shadow Treasurer's remarks.

The shadow Treasurer did raise some questions in relation to Suncorp. It is not a New South Wales company. It has its registered offices here in Spring Hill. It does have a range of other businesses operating around Australia and therefore has some other registrations in other places, but that reflects the nature of it being a national business. Its ABN is registered here in Queensland. I think his question concerned the consequence of not observing the requirements that are contained in the act and that will be preserved in terms of one of the managing directors ordinarily resident. Ultimately, it is always an extraordinary experience to be resident in Queensland. There is no such thing as being ordinarily resident in Queensland.

**Mr Nicholls:** Why would you want to be anywhere else?

**Mr FRASER:** I take the interjection from the shadow Treasurer. Ultimately, part 6 of the existing legislation provides for injunctive relief should it ever arrive at that point. I do not suspect it would, however.

One of the beneficial amendments contained in this act relates to reform to the benefit of the property industry. The reform that is undertaken here to introduce top hatting is one that I know has been particularly cheered for by the property industry. This is one where we utilise the capital gains relief provisions that exist to ensure that, where top hatting can be pursued by the property industry to more efficiently structure its investments and therefore advance the interests of the property industry, this can now take place in Queensland.

The member for Hinchinbrook raised some questions about the nature of those people who presently relate to FPQ. I can assure him that what is occurring here is that existing contracts, whether they relate to customers, joint venture partners or other people in commercial arrangements, will all be transferred holus-bolus to the new entity. Therefore, the issue around compensation does not arise. Given that the rights of entities—indeed, as the rights of employees—are being transferred to the new entity, that question is not one that ultimately arises.

One of the more interesting parts of the debate related to the discussion on the first home owner grant. This is a government that makes absolutely no bones about our decision and our leadership position. We led the way at a national level back in the 2008-09 budget during the last parliament in introducing nation-leading reform for the abolition of stamp duty for homes in Queensland for first home buyers up to \$500,000.

We brought forward the abolition of mortgage duty. That was a saving of up to \$10,000 for first home buyers in this state. It provided a leg up for people to get into the housing market. The first home owner grant is a state program. It is a state funded program. The \$7,000 has always been provided by the state and continues, at this point, to be provided by the state, as it will into the future.

We took the policy decision that if someone were to purchase their first home, at that time, above \$1 million we did not think they needed the leg up that we were seeking to provide everybody else, in terms of the abolition of stamp duty, to get into the housing market. Just as there are progressive tax scales, just as there is reasonable means testing of a whole range of benefits at all different levels of government, that governments of both political persuasions have pursued through the modern history of this nation and others, we believed that this was a policy measure that should be targeted to those who need it most. Yes, we do believe that those folk who are buying their first home above \$750,000 do not need a helping hand, do not need a hand up from the people of Queensland to give them a first home owner grant.

To put that in perspective, the shadow Treasurer asked the question about how many people this would affect, acknowledging that it is presently a \$1 million limit. Last financial year 75 people claimed the first home owner grant above \$1 million. Last financial year there were 256 claims between \$750,000 and \$1 million. This is a policy decision. It was taken in the context of our wide-ranging reforms relating to the abolition of stamp duty and the bringing forward of the full abolition of mortgage duty for everybody. The number of first home owner grants under \$750,000 was 34,134. So this does relate to a class which, in the last financial year, was represented by 256 applicants. Clearly, we believe that this is about making sure that the assistance is appropriately targeted.

It is important to emphasise that the median house price in Brisbane, the capital city, is \$410,000. The average house price for first home owner applicants—those people who go through the first home owner grant system—is \$340,000. The limit that we are putting in place here is more than double the average price that first home owners pay. We believe it is an appropriate reflection of community standards.

It is a great insight into the members opposite that they sought to draw this into question. It gives us a unique perspective on their position. That perspective might be informed by the fact that should someone buy a first home at \$750,000 on the standard 20 per cent deposit, which avoids mortgage insurance, that would mean their repayments on a 30-year mortgage would total more than \$7,000 in two months. So the application of the \$7,000 first home owner grant would in fact represent a mere two months of their repayments as they signed up for a 30-year mortgage.

I ultimately believe, and this government believes, that if a person's first home is going to have the double lock-up garage with room for the two four-wheel drives, the billiard room, the spare room, the rumpus room and everything else, they probably do not need a hand from the Queensland taxpayer. We make no apologies about targeting that assistance to those who need it most.

Ultimately, I got a feeling that we were not the real audience here today for the speech from the shadow Treasurer or those who followed him. I suspect what we saw during the debate today was in fact the Tim supporter parade on show. I think what we saw from the shadow Treasurer was a gallant effort, although a little bit astride the barbed wire, to try, once and for all, to declare that the light of the Liberal Party has not in fact been snuffed out in this state.

What we saw was a rather meek, handwringing contribution about why he does in fact support privatisation even though he has voted against it. What we saw was a dog whistle, an appeal to the business community, an appeal to the natural base of the Liberal Party who are so outraged and perplexed by the unenlightened opposition of the opposition in this place. The audience today was not in here; it was down the road at Waterfront Place. It is down the road to those who are the natural supporters of the Liberal Party. More to the point, it was to his colleagues in the party room; it was to the Liberal Party base who are cheering for someone to come and bring some sense of policy responsibility to the vocation of the opposition in this parliament.

It was a stump speech the likes of which we usually see at preselection. It was an appeal to the base. It was going back to the old ideals of why it should in fact be that if one just happened to be buying their first home at \$5 million they should not deserve a fair go from the taxpayer. What we saw was an appeal to the business community. What we saw was an appeal to the Liberal base from the shadow Treasurer. I encourage him at a million miles an hour to put his hand up, to put his hat in the ring and actually bring some policy responsibility to this debate.

These debates will be so much better for it when there is actually a bit of purchase in the debate and someone who is prepared to put something forward. Ultimately what we saw with this confected anger around the idea that we should cap the first home owner grant for those poor souls who buy million dollar properties as their first home, those poor souls who need a leg up from the other taxpayers in this state was not a contribution of a shadow Treasurer but a contribution of a leadership aspirant. With that, I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

### Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 79, as read, agreed to.

Clause 80—

**Mr NICHOLLS** (6.06 pm): I want to discuss clauses 80 and 81. I am happy to deal with them together if that is acceptable to the chair and to the Treasurer. Clause 80 fundamentally deals with the declaration of the declared projects. Under the original legislation, a project as a declared project then enlivened the powers for the government to dispose of that project. The five projects were listed previously.

What we are doing here is inserting a new declared project which is the Forestry Plantations Queensland Office. The Forestry Plantations Queensland Office was an office that was set up by the government some time ago in order to avoid the operation of the then federal industrial relations laws, the Work Choices legislation, because it was concerned that because FPQ would be a company the employees would fall within the remit of the federal industrial legislation under the corporations power. All the employees of Forestry Plantations Queensland have been moved to the Forestry Plantations Queensland Office which is a body set up by statute that does not fall under that legislation.

Those employees are, in effect, the employees of Forestry Plantations Queensland although legally and statutorily they are covered by the Forestry Plantations Queensland Office. By incorporating the Forestry Plantations Queensland Office in there, effectively this parliament is saying we are including those employees as part of the transfer that we propose undertaking when we sell Forestry Plantations Queensland and all of the rights that go along with that, including the powers that the Treasurer has to transfer their superannuation and to give notice to employers to protect those rights.

We have opposed the sale of Forestry Plantations Queensland, the privatisation of Forestry Plantations Queensland. We continue to oppose the privatisation of Forestry Plantations Queensland for a variety of reasons that have been reiterated here a number of times and have been out there in the past. We cannot in good conscience support clause 80. It goes to facilitating the privatisation. We are opposed to the privatisation.

Clause 81 adds additional entities to those that are subject to the operation of the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Act. It includes the Coordinator-General, the Forestry Plantations Queensland Office and the Urban Land Development Authority as declared entities over whom the Treasurer will also have power in order to facilitate the divestiture of the assets—in fact, the sale of declared projects. Without clause 81 the divestiture that is being proposed by this legislation could not occur.

Again, we do not support the sale of the assets as is being proposed. Clauses 80 and 81 facilitate that. For the reasons that we have set out before, there has been no endorsement by the voting public of Queensland in relation to the sale of the assets in neither that that has been included in clause 80 nor

the effect on those being included under clause 81. So there has been no buy-in by the voting public; they were told about it. In fact, it is quite the opposite. This is a rush sale in a market that is constrained. In particular in relation to the Queensland Rail sale we are concerned about the effect of transferring a public monopoly into a private monopoly. For those reasons, we will not be supporting clauses 80 and 81.

**Mr FRASER:** I thank the shadow Treasurer for his contribution. As the shadow Treasurer points out, FPQ does in fact presently exist of two entities: FPQ itself and FPQO, which was the employing office which, as the shadow Treasurer pointed out, was there to avoid the worst of the excesses of the Work Choices regime under the Howard government. This amendment ensures that the employees who are part of FPQ can be transferred with the business. That ensures that, by this amendment, their rights, conditions and ability to continue in that employment to secure employment into the future under the workforce transition code, with which we have agreed with the union movement on this front, will be facilitated. Clause 81, which I am happy to also deal with constructively together, relates to the fact that the Coordinator-General and the ULDA have some interactions with these entities in terms of contracts that exist or otherwise. This merely clarifies that matter.

Division: Question put—That clause 80 stand part of the bill.

**AYES, 46**—Attwood, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Dick, Farmer, Finn, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Lawlor, Male, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Darling

**NOES, 36**—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Horan, Sorensen

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 80, as read, agreed to.

Clause 81—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hoolihan): Order! As no intervening debate has taken place, the bells will be rung for one minute.

Division: Question put—That clause 81 stand part of the bill.

**AYES, 46**—Attwood, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Dick, Farmer, Finn, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Lawlor, Male, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Darling

**NOES, 36**—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Horan, Sorensen

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 81, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 82 to 86, as read, agreed to.

Clause 87—

**Mr CRIPPS** (6.21 pm): I note the minister's answer to the question that I posed during the second reading debate regarding clause 87. I thank the Treasurer for his response to the matter in his summing-up. Despite his efforts to reassure me, it is still a bit unclear in my mind as to the purpose of clause 87. I will take the opportunity to read the explanation for clause 87 from the explanatory notes, which state—

Clause 87 inserts a new section 11A to deal with the change of status of declared entities as a result of their divestment under IIARDA. Where as a result of a declared project, a declared entity is no longer a GOC, port authority or owned by the Government, section 22 of IIARDA will apply to afford certain protections to the State and the declared entity. The practical effect is that section 22 precludes triggering certain contractual rights in counterparties (eg a third party's right to consent to a change of ownership of a declared entity).

As I understand it, in the Treasurer's explanation to my question asked during the second reading debate he indicated that the divestment of Forestry Plantations Queensland by the government provided for—holus-bolus I think his words were—the transfer of all of the interests of Forestry Plantations Queensland to the entity that the government eventually chooses to divest the business to. That is fair enough, but the implication I am trying to get across to the Treasurer is where, if I am a landowner and I have entered into a plantation forestry agreement with FPQ, I have done that in the knowledge that FPQ is the other partner in that contract. In the event that FPQ, which is what is occurring in this situation, ups and leaves as a result of the government's decision to divest itself of that government owned corporation, you have a situation where that landowner is now in a contract with a different entity. For that reason, it sounds like the practical effect of section 22—the legislative action being taken by the government in this regard—is to preclude a triggering of certain contractual rights in counterparties, that being a third party's right to a consent of change of ownership of a declared entity,

and that a person in such a contract, in this instance a landowner, would have an opportunity to give or withhold their consent to the change of ownership of this declared entity. That is the issue that I am trying to get to.

I understand the Treasurer's explanation insofar as he insists that all of the interests of FPQ are transferred to the new contract, but the landowner who has a contract with FPQ did not have an opportunity to make a decision about whether they wanted to enter into a contract with the entity that the government divests FPQ to. Would the Treasurer be able to provide any further explanation as to the reason for clause 87 in that regard?

**Mr FRASER:** I thank the member for Hinchinbrook for his question. His assessment of the operation of the clause in those circumstances is in fact correct. As I said earlier in my summing-up, this is about ensuring that, across the program that we are undertaking, all entities, their interests, their obligations and otherwise are transferred to the new entity. In the circumstance that the member for Hinchinbrook puts forward in his discussion of this clause, that would be the effect of the operation—that is, that the transfer is able to take place by virtue of the operation of this section.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Just on that particular point then, it is often the case that the person entering into the contract with the entity, whether it is Forestry Plantations Queensland, government owned or privately owned, will often make a decision to enter into that contract based on the nature of the entity. So the government is often seen in a different light from a private listed trust, for example Great Southern Plantations, where you would have some different things. Is there any surety that is being given to the person entering into that contract when the change occurs that they will have the same rights that they would have, knowing that the government is standing behind Forestry Plantations Queensland as opposed to what would be the case with a private listed entity, for example?

**Mr FRASER:** To be clear about it, all the rights and obligations between the parties transfer. I think we are operating on the basis where we both are agreeing on that point. The transaction that will take place will go to an entity that has to satisfy criteria other than price. One of those, for instance, is the ability to remain an accredited provider of a forestry service, to be licensed under the relevant licensing arrangements to ensure that there is a level of creditworthiness and otherwise to the entity. So ultimately, in practical effect, this is a question that I do not expect to arise in a substantive way to those who have third-party relations to FPQ because, ultimately, all of those obligations, both by and to FPQ, transfer to the new entity.

**Mr CRIPPS:** I want to ask the Treasurer a question on the issue in another way to perhaps try to better enunciate my concern. Why does the Treasurer need clause 87? If holus-bolus the interests of FPQ in that contract with that landowner are transferred to the new entity that the government divests FPQ to, why would there be a section in the original agreement that gave the landowner an opportunity to consent to or withhold consent to the change of ownership of a declared entity? Why would that contractual right exist in the first instance if the landowner in that contract need not have an opportunity to exercise that right when the ownership of FPQ is divested to another entity?

Why would it be in the original contract, which clause 87 is seeking to negate, because clause 87 inserts a new section to negate the right of that landowner to give effect to that contractual right? This is the issue I am trying to get an answer to. I wonder why clause 87 is necessary. If that landowner in a contract with FPQ had that right under the original contract, why ought that landowner not be given an opportunity to exercise that contractual right when the proposal goes forward for FPQ to be divested to another entity?

**Mr FRASER:** I thank the member for Hinchinbrook. It has been the experience in the past, as I think has been discussed either in this parliament or during the estimates process, that in previous transactions—the wind farm transaction in Western Australia, for instance—there were complications put forward by the contracting parties about unreasonably withholding consent to such arrangements. This merely provides the opportunity for the government in those circumstances to be able to progress this transaction and provide certainty for the future owner.

Clause 87, as read, agreed to.

Clause 88—

**Mr NICHOLLS** (6.31 pm): Clause 88 in effect acts to remove some fairly longstanding provisions that would otherwise have effect under the Property Law Act 1974, in particular in relation to covenants not to assign without obtaining consent. I guess this is because the nature of the deal has changed from a sale to a 99-year lease program. There are also some relief and forfeiture provisions in part 8 division 3 which are longstanding as well and are, to an extent, replaced by the provisions of proposed sections 15A and 15B on the way through. The question to the Treasurer is: why is it considered necessary to remove from the operation of this particular program clauses that would have effect in terms of every other commercial lease that would be in place, including other long-term leases that might be in other commercial arrangements, whether they be leases in shopping centres or whatever? Is it simply because it is transferring in effect the ownership of those assets all the way over and the government does not want to have the flavour of a commercial relationship that would normally be the case?

**Mr FRASER:** The shadow Treasurer is right. This is an amendment that relates to the fact that we are proposing 99-year leases and therefore the removal of the normal operation of the Property Law Act is warranted given that the potential purchaser here of the business is one who will come to that transaction from a position of having their own advice and having their own wits about them as a contracting entity. Therefore, we are seeking to provide for commercial certainty for the contracting entity. This is not in relation to any other aspect; it is one that relates to the third-party potential purchaser and is there to provide a requisite level of bankable and commercial certainty to them.

Clause 88, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 89 to 118, as read, agreed to.

### Third Reading

**Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development) (6.32 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

### Long Title

**Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development) (6.33 pm): I move—

That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 6.34 pm to 7.35 pm.

## NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from 9 March (see p. 700), on motion of Mr Robertson—

That the bill be now read a second time.

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (7.35 pm): I rise to lead the consideration of the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010. I say at the outset that I think that this is something of a first in this parliament in the years that I have been here. Traditionally, natural resources legislation is debated in this parliament on a Thursday, usually when the government wants to get out of here. Natural resources legislation and the consideration of natural resources legislation has always been very low on this government's list of priorities. For 10 years it has brought natural resources legislation into this parliament on a Thursday afternoon and more often than not gagged the debate because members opposite do not want to talk about natural resources legislation. It is not important to them. It is not a priority. If one looks at the list of legislation this government has brought into this parliament over the years, it vindicates the belief that it is a very low priority for this government.

One has to ask oneself why this legislation is before the House today on a Tuesday, the first day of a parliamentary sitting week—quite the opposite to what we have ever seen before with regard to natural resources legislation. Why has it been brought on in such a rush? It is only just mature under the parliamentary rules. It was only introduced at the last sitting of the parliament and it has been brought on for consideration at its first possible opportunity. It is a big piece of legislation—some 282 pages—and today, to demonstrate the extent to which the legislation has been rushed into this House, the minister has tabled in the parliament a further 51 amendments to the legislation before the House.

There has to be a reason why we are here on a Tuesday talking about natural resources legislation, which we have never done before, and why we are here considering a piece of natural resources legislation at the earliest possible moment following its introduction into the House. The reason is not hard to find. The legislation deals with a whole range of issues covering a whole range of acts. The part of the bill and explanatory notes that indicates why we are here on a Tuesday—why this legislation has to be rushed—is that part of the bill that deals with, in the words of the explanatory notes—

the Forestry Act 1959, its Regulations and certain other Acts (Forestry Act) to:

- facilitate the restructure of the State's interest in Forestry Plantations Queensland (FPQ) and to amend the Forestry Act and other legislation to provide an appropriate regulatory framework for the future.



What it should have said is 'to provide an appropriate regulatory framework for the government to sell it off', because that is what it is about. That is why this legislation is here in a rush and in a panic, because the government needs this legislation to complete its panicked sale of Queenslanders' assets. This is another indication of the extent to which the government has mismanaged the Queensland economy. This is another indication of the extent to which the government cannot get anything right. This is a Labor government that went broke in a boom. The biggest economic boom in Queensland's history saw this government run up \$85 billion worth of debt and then go to an election six months early on the pretext that it somehow needed an early election to save the world. Once re-elected, it surprised the people of Queensland with an agenda to sell \$15 billion worth of their assets—a sale of \$15 billion worth of their assets that it did not think that it needed to tell the people of Queensland about when it went to that election six months early. It is the sale of those assets that has engendered the introduction of this legislation into the House.

The necessity to complete the sale of those assets in indecent haste has meant that on a Tuesday the Minister for Natural Resources is debating his legislation when, for the past 10 or 12 years, such legislation was always consigned to the lower end of the government's priority. Now it is a priority because there is a dollar in it. It is a priority because the government has seen an opportunity to gouge a few dollars from the assets of the Queensland people. In this case, it is the assets that make up Forestry Plantations Queensland. That is why the legislation is here and everybody needs to understand that. We have said that we will oppose the government's privatisation program because it is ill-conceived and it is being done in a panic to cover its own financial mismanagement. We have said that we will oppose the privatisation agenda at every step of the way. Because this legislation is part of that privatisation agenda, because this legislation is part of the enabling legislation that makes it possible for the Queensland government to sell off \$15 billion worth of Queenslanders' assets—which it did not tell the people of Queensland about and to which the people of Queensland have reacted angrily ever since hearing about the agenda—obviously we will oppose this legislation in the House tonight or whenever the consideration of it is completed.

In its mean, tricky and deceitful way, the government has not had the integrity to come in here with a piece of legislation that just deals with its program to sell off Queensland's assets. It has come in here with a piece of legislation that rolls together a whole lot of other natural resource issues that we do not oppose. Some of them are longstanding issues and it could be suggested the government should have sorted them out quite some time ago had it had a competent minister and a competent department and had it placed any priority on natural resource legislation and the regulation and administration of natural resources in this state. But, of course, it has not done that. The only reason these other issues appear in the legislation is to somehow disguise and confuse the main driver and incentive for the government in bringing this legislation into the House tonight which, as I said, is to amend the Forestry Act to facilitate the restructure of the state's interests in Forestry Plantations Queensland.

The other issues that the bill addresses are listed in the explanatory notes. It seeks to amend the Land Act 1994, the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act 2003 and the Water Act 2000 to introduce a feature based methodology to resolve uncertainty in the location of ambulatory boundaries adjoining tidal and non-tidal waters and to clarify the lateral extent of the state's management powers in non-tidal watercourses in the Water Act. It seeks to amend the Land Act to extend, from 30 to 100 years, the term that a trust lease or sublease can be granted over an operational deed of grant in trust. It seeks to clarify some of the provisions relating to the implementation of the Delbessie Agreement that arose from the State Rural Leasehold Land Strategy.

The bill seeks to amend the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 and the Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003 to amend the definition of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander native title party for an area and put beyond doubt the identity of the native title party. It seeks to make minor changes to the endorsement of individuals and companies registered as surveyors by amending the Surveyors Act 2003. It seeks to amend the Land Title Act 1994 and the Land Act to clarify, update and improve provisions for the keeping of the registers relating to land. It seeks to amend the Land Title Act and the Land Act to replace or complement existing advertisement publication and notice provisions. It seeks to amend the infamous Vegetation Management Act 1999 in relation to its operation in national parks. It seeks to amend the Water Act to provide for the finalisation of the Lower Balonne provisions for the Condamine and Balonne resource operations plan.

We do not oppose any of those things. In fact, we support many of them. I will go through them one at a time to indicate the opposition's support where that support is deserved. However, the fact that they have been included in this legislation, which seeks to facilitate the flogging off of Queensland's assets to try to save a failing government from the consequences of its own financial mismanagement, means that no doubt our opposition to this bill will be misrepresented. Let me make it very clear for anyone who wants to read this debate and understand the position that the opposition has been put in: we support all of those other provisions; we support all of the intents of the bill, except the intent to facilitate the sale of Forestry Plantations Queensland. I would suggest that is its main intent because this legislation is being made a priority and is being rushed into the parliament, just as the sale of the

assets has been done in a hasty and misguided way. This legislation has also been done in a hasty and misguided way, as evidenced by the 51 amendments the minister has sought to table in the parliament today. I will deal with the issues one at a time.

The first issue relates to ambulatory property boundaries. The bill seeks to amend the Land Act to make some changes to the whole concept of ambulatory property boundaries. Ambulatory property boundaries are so-called because they are boundaries that move with erosion and accretion. They are boundaries that are normally defined in relation to a body of water. I do not accept the implication in the minister's very minimalist second reading speech that somehow or other this a minor amendment that does not make fundamental changes and should not cause any concern to Queensland landholders.

An attempt has been made to portray these changes as a simple response to a single court case. I do not accept that that is the case. The legislation before the House should be of immediate concern to all landholders who have ambulatory property boundaries or riparian landholders who own lots that have riparian rights to watercourses or a boundary that joins a tidal estuary or beachfront land. It should be of concern to everybody who has an understanding of and values the concept of property rights. Twice I have introduced into this parliament bills seeking to protect the property rights of Queenslanders. It is an issue that is of critical importance in the administration of land across the state. It is an issue that is of critical importance in ensuring that land is properly managed because without secure property rights, without that security that landholders deserve that their property rights are beyond dispute, land management becomes a farce.

Ambulatory property boundaries have been an issue for a long time. At different times there have been major problems with determining those property boundaries in relation to tidal estuaries where often the boundary was determined by the high tide mark or the spring tide level, which can lead to a lot of misunderstanding. There have been many attempts by landholders to interpret their boundary differently in relation to the old cadastral maps that they had. It was well established that those properties had a boundary that related to the spring tide level; at least, that was the case before the court case that the minister mentioned in his second reading speech.

Also, with riparian boundaries or situations where a watercourse forms a boundary, there has been a lot of confusion and a lot of different theories. A lot of those things have not been tested in court but they are ideas that are passionately held by landholders, especially in rural areas. There have been numerous attempts to define what a watercourse actually is. We have debated that in this parliament in a number of pieces of legislation. There have been a number of different interpretations about where a property boundary is when a property has the watercourse as its boundary with another lot on the other side. There have been suggestions that the property boundary is in the centre of the watercourse. There have been suggestions that the boundary should be drawn where the water 'normally' flows. The concept of the high bank has been used in different places to determine the property boundary. Then there have been other suggestions that it is somehow the low bank. All of those things are open to interpretation and open to definition. None of them, I believe, have provided a satisfactory resolution to the whole issue.

Let me deal with tidal boundaries first. Boundaries of a number of lots have been defined as the high tide level and that has become over the years the accepted position—that the high tide level defined the boundaries of lots. It was defined in the act as the 'ordinary high-water mark at spring tides'. However, in the court case of *Svensden v State of Queensland*, it was interpreted as meaning the 'mean high-water springs'. This interpretation has shifted the accepted boundaries closer to the water and caused conflict over accepted access issues. It is the reason that is given by the minister for the inclusion of these provisions relating to ambulatory property boundaries in the legislation. As I said, I believe the provisions of the bill could go a lot further than what would have been necessary to respond simply to that particular piece of litigation.

There has been a need to establish where private land ends and where public land begins. It has been important for beach access. There have been issues of beachside property owners trying to restrict beach access—beachside property owners who believed that they had the right of exclusive access to a particular beach because of the land title that they held. The definition of tidal boundaries and the resolution of those access issues have the potential to affect the value of properties in a very real way. It affects the value of beachfront homes and beachfront properties which have been increasingly valuable with the passage of time. It leads to all sorts of disputes not only about access but about such things as fishing and swimming.

In relation to the riparian boundaries, the watercourse was defined as the boundary between land parcels in many cases. There has been a need to establish the rights and responsibilities in regard to the watercourse and the application of the Water Act. The watercourse definition has always been difficult for landholders in rural areas, so boundary definition and the establishment in law has been equally difficult. There have always been issues about access rights along watercourses, especially with the introduction of native title and the introduction of the Water Act 2000. There is the issue of grazing rights along watercourses. Given some of the definitions that have been adopted for watercourses, the

areas that are involved make that grazing rights issue very significant. There have been issues of the extraction rights that landholders have for the watercourses where they have a riparian boundary—extraction rights to things such as sand and gravel and timber in some cases.

This bill is a fundamental change in approach in identifying and locating those boundaries in law. It changes identification of the boundary to a physical feature on the ground, rather than the relationship with the body of water. There is a large number of different circumstances involved in establishing these boundaries, and the conversion from the relationship with the body of water to a physical feature on the ground I believe is very much open to interpretation. The bill establishes a new boundary in law regardless of what may be depicted on any map and regardless of what words may be used in any grant or title. That is a concern, because it does not pay just heed to the rights of property owners. The tidal boundary location criteria, for example, are very broad. The bill states—

... the tidal boundary must be on the landward side of any sandy beaches, foredunes, mangroves, sea grasses, salt grasses, salt marshes ...

In another section it says—

... the location of the tidal boundary must be consistent with the public interest.

The concept of being consistent with the public interest is totally undefined and very much left up to interpretation. The suggestion that the tidal boundary must be on the landward side of any sandy beach, foredunes, mangroves, seagrasses or salt grasses equally is open to interpretation, because there is no definition for foredunes. Such things as foredunes and salt grasses are very much open to interpretation.

The most worrying of all is that the bill includes a power for the chief executive to declare where the boundary is. It allows the chief executive—and everybody knows that therein they can read ‘the minister of the day’—to declare where a boundary is. It specifically provides no compensation. In fact, quite an argument is advanced in the explanatory notes to justify this idea of not being liable for compensation for any land lost through that declaration. It is conceded in the explanatory notes that it is likely that landholders will lose areas of land through those declarations that the minister makes.

It raises a very real concern about property rights. I am very cautious about any legislation which seeks to impinge on a private owner’s property rights and specifically rules out compensation. I am disturbed by the reference in the explanatory notes that the bill is somehow justified by a need that the government has identified. There are a number of statements in the explanatory notes which give me cause for concern when the government seeks to justify this position of affecting the property rights of individual property owners and specifically ruling out compensation. One of them states—

- The necessity to maintain public access and ownership of Queensland beaches and the otherwise prohibitive cost of doing so should compensation be payable to all affected landholders;

That statement rules out compensation because of the cost. It is suggesting that, because the compensation costs too much, individual landholders should bear that cost rather than the government. As a concept, I find that repugnant. I find it repugnant to suggest that if there is a cost involved in the imposition of these statutes and these regulations on individual property owners then they have to bear that cost because the government considers it too much for it to bear. It is a fundamental principle that I have espoused in this parliament over a long period of time and it is a fundamental principle that I think should be applied with respect to all landholders—that when a property right is required for the public benefit then the public should be prepared to properly compensate, to properly pay, the individual private property owner for that property right. That it can be ruled out because it might be too valuable is a repugnant concept.

It is also argued in the explanatory notes that the land that would be lost under these provisions would be ‘of little or no consequence’ because ‘planning legislation and coastal protection legislation have over the years reduced the scope for development’. If you understand and value the concept of property rights then compensation is either justified or not. Either the property right exists or it does not. The two arguments that are advanced are, to my mind, indicative of the desperation that the government has to try to rule out the concept of compensation, because the arguments are contradictory.

One argument suggests that it costs too much, so therefore compensation is not possible. The other argument suggests that the land has no real value because the rights have already been lost due to the imposition of previous legislation. They are contradictory arguments, but both should be rejected out of hand. If this legislation or any piece of legislation imposes upon the individual property rights of landholders, then those landholders should be compensated if that imposition is done for the public benefit.

To determine whether or not compensation is warranted in the instance of this legislation, I believe we need to look at the original intent of the land title. What rights were meant to be inherent in a land title when it was granted? What rights were meant to be inherent in land titles to blocks of land

which have riparian boundaries in relation to their riparian boundaries? And what rights were inherent in land titles granted for blocks which had beachfront access in relation to that beachfront access? Was it intended, for example, that private ownership of beaches and streams would be part of our property system, as it is in many European systems? I do not believe it was intended that there be private ownership of streams in Queensland in the same way that some streams in England and in some European countries are privately owned. I do not believe it was intended that beaches in Queensland were meant to be privately owned by the people who owned lots that bordered those beaches. I believe it is the case that the movement of the boundaries by whatever natural force has created an unintended situation. Most probably in most contentious situations the contention has arisen because of the natural forces causing those boundaries to move.

In the case of tidal boundaries, the intent of our land law was clear. I believe that the land law intended that there be access for the public to an area between the high and low tide. It was never intended that that area would be privately owned or included in the lot that shared a boundary with the beach. However, references in the definitions that I referred to earlier about foredunes and grassed areas are of much greater concern. Examples can easily be found along the coast where the public access issue is still not solved by adopting the high/low tide definition.

This bill will establish the boundary to give public access to areas where public access is due and state control to significant areas of land to ensure that public access, but it gives no recognition to property owners' rights or consideration of the original intent of the title deed. When you read the bill, when you read the explanatory notes, when you read the minister's very minimalistic second reading speech, you see no recognition of the need to be cognisant of the rights of property owners. There is no priority given to preserving, respecting or even recognising the rights of those property owners.

I believe that in some situations compensation would be appropriate. It at least needs to be a consideration. If significant areas of land or significant rights are lost to ensure public access is available or state control is undisputed in the case of watercourses, then fairness would dictate that compensation be payable. The deciding principle should be whether or not the original intent of the grant of title is varied.

As the bill currently stands, it depends on trust in the minister to use the powers it gives reasonably and fairly. No-one who has sat in this House over the last 10 years would have any faith that this government would use its powers in relation to natural resource management or land management reasonably and fairly. No-one who has followed the debates that have gone on in this parliament over the last 10 years and in the public arena would doubt for a moment that the government will misuse those powers. It will misuse those powers because it has no sense of fairness or reasonableness when it comes to Queensland landowners. It is prepared to give away Queensland landholders' land rights as election pawns, as negotiating tokens in the battle to get green preferences at election time. We have seen that with the Vegetation Management Act and we have seen it with the Wild Rivers Act, where in both cases the government was prepared to abandon logic, common sense, reason and science simply to get green preferences, simply to do a grubby little election deal which will forever stain the record of democracy in this state because it was a low point of administration.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

**Mr SEENEY:** No wonder the minister is ashamed.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms O'Neill): Order! Member for Callide, there is a point of order.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Madam Deputy Speaker, far from being ashamed, I remind the honourable member that he supported the legislation.

**Mr Hopper:** That's not a point of order. You should know better than that!

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. I call the member for Callide.

**Mr SEENEY:** Madam Deputy Speaker, not only is it not a point of order; it is dishonest, it is a lie, it is wrong and the minister knows it is wrong.

**Mr Robertson:** I have tabled it in the *Hansard*.

**Mr SEENEY:** The minister knows that it is wrong.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. On previous occasions I have tabled the *Hansard* of the then Leader of the Opposition, Lawrence Springborg, who actually supported the legislation, and the vote in the *Hansard* supports that contention.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The member for Callide has the floor.

**Mr SEENEY:** The minister can protest as much as he likes. The record of this government is clear. It is prepared to use land legislation and natural resource legislation as election-negotiating tokens. It is prepared to negotiate away any resemblance of common sense, of reasonableness, of fairness, of science based decision making just to get green preferences. It did it before the last election, and the people of Queensland know only too well that it will do it again if it once again feels threatened. The bill before the House unfortunately provides opportunities for that to happen in the future with regard to the rights of riparian landholders and landholders who own beachfront property. The people of Queensland need to be aware of that, and they need to be very cautious about the way in which this legislation will be used.

Watercourses have often been used to define the boundary between land parcels. Owners on either side of the watercourse had riparian rights, and those rights extended to the right to stock and domestic water, and in the early days before it was regulated to irrigation water. Since the regulation of irrigation water in the provisions of the Water Act 2000, the riparian rights of landholders have been limited to stock and domestic water rights and to the grazing rights that I mentioned earlier.

Traditionally, in many cases those grazing rights were seen to extend to the centre line and it was managed on a give-and-take arrangement along the watercourse in most instances, excepting in a permanent watercourse where the water formed a physical barrier to grazing stock. In most cases those grazing rights are exercised on a give-and-take basis so that landholders share the grazing rights associated with a watercourse and respect the stock and domestic water rights that have always been recognised as riparian rights.

There are also extractive rights for gravel, for sand and for timber—all of which have become regulated over time but were certainly not when original land titles were issued. There are also rights to construct banks or dams and small water storages to enable the exercising of those stock and domestic water rights. All of those have been dealt with by neighbours on a negotiated basis in many different situations.

Since the Water Act 2000 and the increasing regulation of watercourses, the definition of a watercourse has become increasingly problematic. The bill before the House seeks once again to tinker with that definition. Definitions have revolved around the normal water flow and scour marks but seems now to have settled on a concept of bed and banks. I believe that the definition of a watercourse is still going to be problematic. It is still going to be difficult, and it will undoubtedly give rise to contention in the future. The bill before the House seeks to address that, I think. It recognises that the definition that has been adopted for a watercourse is not definitive and it does not solve the problem. Once again, it provides that power of discretion to the minister.

The bill before the House will undoubtedly extend the operation of the provisions of the Water Act to a greater area of land than it has in the past. The explanatory notes try to justify this by arguing that there is no loss of private ownership of that land. It fails once again to completely recognise that the loss of ownership rights is equal to the loss of ownership.

Labor fundamentally does not understand property rights. The loss of rights is the loss of ownership. While it might technically still be private land, if the landowner has no rights because of the Water Act or the landowner has a diminished right, then the ownership of that land is either taken away or diminished according to those circumstances. It is a fundamental concept that Labor fails to recognise again and again. It has failed to recognise it again in this bill.

The bill proposes to use a system of trigger points. Trigger point 1 is set to be the commencement of the legislation. Trigger point 2 is established when a new land survey is conducted for it to be registered. Both trigger points provide that the relevant boundary at law will become the line of a natural feature even though prior to the enactment of this bill the boundary could have been located closer to the water body that defined the original boundary or indeed within the water body if the location or extent of the water body had shifted over time.

The bill means that some lots will undoubtedly be made smaller in area than they were originally surveyed. It establishes the boundary in law. However, it is the loss of the rights that is the true measure of the impact of this legislation. It is the loss of those property rights that is the measure of the impact of this legislation that this government has completely ignored, that the minister has completely ignored in his second reading speech and that have been completely ignored in the explanatory notes that accompany the legislation.

In the case of beachside property, it is the loss of a right to exclusive possession to a particular area of land. In the case of watercourse boundaries, it is the loss of rights to extract resources such as timber or gravel, the loss of rights to construct water storages or the loss of any right that was previously considered to be available to a landholder because it was outside the watercourse.

In considering this question of ambulatory boundaries, the opposition has been faced with a vexed decision. It has been an issue that has been around for a long time. It is an issue that has been a problem. It is an issue that has, to some extent, been brought into focus by the court case that is

referred to in the minister's second reading speech and in the explanatory notes. But the government response takes no concern of property rights. We are fundamentally concerned about property rights. There is undoubtedly a loss of rights for landholders. A loss of rights is equal to a loss of property.

As I indicated in my detailed consideration of this question, the intent of the original title has to be the determining element. I believe that there is some argument for some compensation provisions where that original intent is breached. I believe there should have been compensation provisions in this legislation. I believe that the powers that are granted to the minister to make these determinations should have been compensatable powers. If nothing else, it would provide a brake on the decisions of an irresponsible minister. The landholders of Queensland know that it is quite possible to have an irresponsible minister administering this part of government legislation.

However, we will not oppose the provisions of this part of the legislation. We do not oppose the changes that are made. We do that with caution. We do that almost with reluctance because the granting of those determination powers to a minister without the corresponding commitment to compensation is indeed a dangerous thing. This is an issue that needs to be resolved. It is an issue that has needed to be resolved for some time. In the absence of any better resolution then we are prepared to accept that the resolution that is contained in the bill at least provides a solution but one that needs to be used with caution, one that needs to be used very carefully by the government and the by the minister of the day.

I will move on to the proposed amendments to the Land Act that seek to deal with the Delbessie Agreement. This is an agreement that was signed in December 2007. It arose out of the Rural Leasehold Land Strategy. The Delbessie Agreement provides incentives for lease periods to be extended depending on a number of conditions that holders of those leases are able to meet.

It was the culmination of a long-running argument about the security of tenure for western grazing leases. It dealt with a number of fundamental concepts with regard to good land management and good land administration. As I recall well, there was a view at the time within the Labor government that somehow these land leases were a bit like leasing a house in Brisbane or leasing a unit on the Gold Coast. Those sorts of comparisons were made by members in this House during the consideration of the question at the time. Nothing can be further from the truth.

The leases that were issued are land titles. Like all other land titles their worth is dependent upon their security. Unless landholders have that security of title, unless they are confident about the long-term security of their land title, then all other matters relating to land management fall away as insignificant. It is a fundamental in land management, it is a fundamental in land administration that landholders must have secure land title—secure land title to ensure that they have the incentive to invest and manage for the long term.

I am pleased to see that the provisions in this bill seek to provide mechanisms to allow those lease periods to be extended. They seek to allow those lease periods to be extended out to 50 and 75 years. In the consideration in detail stage I may explore those conditions in greater detail. In terms of the fundamental concepts, I think the Labor government has come a long way.

There is still no recognition of the right of renewal. Unless those leases have a right of renewal for the landholder then that concept of secure property title is not met. I believe, and I have argued over a long period of time, that with the issue of these leases historically there was an accepted, if not stated, recognition that landholders had a right to expect those leases to be renewed. It is a question that still has to be addressed. Even with the Delbessie Agreement and even with the changes that have been previously made to grazing leases and that are being made to special leases in this particular legislation, there is no recognition of that need to address the question of the landholder's right of renewal—the concept that that right of renewal now needs to be stated to ensure that there are those incentives for long-term proper management of those areas. I think that is something that needs to be addressed. It is not addressed in this the bill. It is noticeable by its omission.

I turn now to the amendments that are proposed to make changes to the DOGIT subleases. For those members who are not familiar with the term, DOGITs are deeds of grant in trust. They are land titles that are granted to groups of people. They had their origin in a desire by the previous conservative government to give a title that was equal to freehold to Aboriginal communities. But they have since been used for a wide range of other applications where land titles were needed to give title to land to groups of people rather than individuals. So deeds of grant in trust have been used for things such as showgrounds in a number of towns, airports, caravan parks and recreation reserves. Things such as that are now held by various groups of Queenslanders as deeds of grant in trust. They are distinguished from the Aboriginal deeds of grant in trust by the use of the term 'operational DOGITs', and that is the term that is used in the bill.

The amendments that are contained in the bill seek to amend the Land Act to allow subleases on those DOGIT areas—on those areas that are held as deeds of grant in trust—to be granted to individuals or separate titleholders for a period of a hundred years. It is a mechanism that is needed to allow private investment in particular areas. It is a mechanism that is welcome. It is a mechanism that

recognises the need for long-term, secure title to enable the investment to take place—investment that is required to enable, for example, the establishment of a facility at an airport that is held by a community as a deed of grant in trust or a facility at a caravan park. In my electorate I have a caravan park and a camping ground that has probably got \$3 million or \$4 million worth of assets on the area of land. That area of land is held as a deed of grant in trust by the community with the council as a trustee. It is always an issue of concern for investors, for financiers, to provide a long-term, secure land title to enable that sort of investment to take place. The amendments that are proposed in this bill do just that. They are long overdue. I welcome their inclusion in the legislation.

The final part of the bill that I wish to talk about—before I get to the forestry provisions, of course—relates to the Condamine and Balonne resource operations plan. The provisions in the bill seek to finalise the Condamine and Balonne resource operations plan by finalising the Lower Balonne provisions. The member for Warrego will speak at length about this because it is an issue within his area. It was deferred for finalisation from December 2008 due to judicial review by the Supreme Court in a case that was known as the Munya Lake v the Department of Natural Resources and Water. It is a welcome finalisation to this issue because it allows landholders in the area covered by the Condamine and Balonne resource operations plan to partake in the water market—a water market that is currently offering opportunities to landholders as the federal government moves to purchase water for the environment.

The federal minister, Penny Wong, has made some major water purchases in New South Wales just down the watercourse from this area of the Condamine and Balonne resource operations plan. It is welcome that Queensland landholders who hold those water allocations will now be able to participate in that market. It is a market that is a free market. It is a market that needs to be a free market. It is a market that we have supported so long as it is a market conducted between willing buyers—obviously the federal government—and willing sellers. But no matter how willing a seller Queensland landholders have been, they have been unable to participate in that water market until the finalisation of the Condamine and Balonne water resource operations plan. The bill before the House brings about that finalisation. It, too, could be argued that it is long overdue. It ensures that Queensland landholders can participate in that water market to the same extent that their colleagues across the border can.

Now I turn to the forestry provisions in the bill which are essentially the reason this bill is before the House in this most unusual way. There are obviously the conceptual issues about the sale of Queensland assets. Nobody should try to misrepresent the opposition's position. The Premier sought to do that this morning in this parliament simply because I asked a question about the government's privatisation agenda, and I have no doubt that members of the government will seek to do that in the future. But the opposition's position has been made very clear: we do not support the panic sale of Queenslanders' assets to try to repair the damaged finances of an incompetent government. That is the position.

It bears repeating: we do not support the panic sale of Queenslanders' assets to raise revenue to repair the financial accounts of an incompetent government. That is what is being proposed by Anna Bligh and the Labor government of Queensland at the moment. That is what is being proposed and is being proposed in a sneaky, underhanded and dishonest way. It was proposed after the government went to an election six months early to hide the damage that had been done to the state's finances. They went to an election six months early to ensure that the people of Queensland did not become aware of the extent of the damage they had done to the state's finances through all of those boom years. Then since they have been re-elected they have asked the people of Queensland to accept this agenda of privatisation to raise \$15 billion to repair the financial damage caused by their own incompetence. The provisions in this bill are part of that agenda.

The provisions in this bill are the enabling provisions for the sale of Forestry Plantations Queensland. We do not support that. There is a whole range of things about the proposals contained in this bill that are in themselves of concern and would not be supported. We do not support the whole sale. We do not support the agenda of the forced, panicked privatisation of these assets in any way. I will consider some of the issues that are also of concern in what is being proposed.

It is a major issue which will have long-term impacts on Queensland taxpayers through the ownership of the state's plantation and forestry interests as well as on community recreation and on neighbouring landholders, none of which the government seems to recognise. It is clear, as I indicated at the beginning of this consideration, that the bill has been rushed into this parliament for the fire sale of taxpayers' assets. No greater evidence of that is required than the 51 amendments which have followed into this House today.

The bill facilitates the restructure of the state's interest in Forestry Plantations Queensland. It is a major step in the sell-off of the plantations part of Queensland's state forests. It is the first in the line-up of assets that the government is proposing to sell. It impacts upon 300,000 hectares of plantation forestry including a 100,000-hectare buffer area. It proposes a 99-year lease be granted to a licensee to own, manage and benefit from the trees on that land. That in itself is an issue—the fact that a 99-year lease is being proposed. The growing of trees is obviously a long-term activity. It takes a long time for a

cycle to be completed, from the planting to the harvesting of trees. The fact that a 99-year lease has been chosen as the title reinforces the points that I made earlier about the need for secure land titles to encourage investment. The fact that the government has proposed a 99-year lease will reduce the value of the asset. It will significantly reduce the value of the asset. Had the government elected for some sort of title in perpetuity, the asset would have been worth much more to the people of Queensland.

It has marked similarities to what the government is doing with Queensland Rail. In this case, as in that case, the government's position has been adopted because of its underlying socialist philosophy. The government has adopted a position that will guarantee that the people of Queensland will receive less for the asset that it seeks to sell in a dishonest, sneaky way. The people of Queensland will receive less because, in this case, the government cannot bring itself to give the licensee title in perpetuity. The government cannot recognise the worth of secure property titles. The government cannot understand the necessity for secure property titles to encourage the type of investment that is necessary. Because of that socialist philosophy, the government has sought to settle on this 99-year lease.

It is the same socialist philosophy that prevents the government allowing the big, bad coal companies buying the railway in the case of QR. We have seen some remarkable examples in this House of how the socialist philosophy runs away with people such as the Premier and the member for Rockhampton, who get all hot and sweaty and talk about horrible tories and big companies and how their ownership of these assets would be somehow dastardly and has to be prevented at all costs. It is the maintenance of that philosophy that is costing Queenslanders large amounts of money in this panic sale of assets that is being undertaken by the government.

There is another issue in relation to the sale of Forestry Plantations Queensland which was raised earlier tonight in a debate on another piece of legislation, and that is how the sale impacts on the rights of landholders who hold contracts with Forestry Plantations Queensland. In many instances these plantations were established through contractual arrangements on private land. That regime was put in place by the previous minister for primary industries, Henry Palaszczuk. There are large areas of such timber plantations in my electorate where the timber is being grown under contractual arrangements with Forestry Plantations Queensland. But the government is proposing to sell those contracts as part of the licence that it is going to grant to a private equity company.

In any normal contractual situation, it is common for the consent of the second contractual party to be required for the transfer of the contractual rights of the first contractual party. That is a common requirement that, for example, bodies corporate strike with body corporate managers. The body corporate has to approve the sale of a body corporate manager's contract. Yet when it comes to Queensland landholders, that provision—that protection—is being specifically removed.

That particular provision should be particularly pertinent in this situation, because the landholders in my electorate and across Queensland were prepared to enter into a contract with the government. They were prepared to enter into a contract with Henry Palaszczuk, when he was the minister, with Forestry Plantations Queensland to grow timber on their land. Had those landholders been offered a similar contract with a listed private entity, they may well have had other considerations. They very much may well have had other issues to consider. The fact that it was a contract with the government—the fact that it was a contract with Forestry Plantations Queensland with all of the expertise that they considered that the forestry department had, with all of the security that they considered that a contract with the government gave them—was a major determinant in the terms of that contract. Yet the government is going to specifically remove the rights of those people to have any say. Although the land will remain in the hands of the government, the contract will be part of the asset that is transferred to the licensee, along with the trees.

A whole range of issues regarding the management of that land needs to be resolved and is not resolved by this legislation. All of the issues that are inherent in any good neighbour policy need to be identified—and I am sure the member for Condamine, as the responsible shadow minister, will deal with them in some detail. As a small example, the control of feral pigs will be of no concern to a company that seeks to grow trees. Yet the control of feral pigs will be of great concern to the neighbouring landholders who will have the misfortune to have these plantations as their neighbours. All of those land management issues that we understand are not resolved or dealt with by this government, because this government is all about ensuring that it can squeeze the last dollar out of Forestry Plantations Queensland. The government has chosen a model that will ensure that the people of Queensland will be short-changed.

We will oppose that part of the legislation, because it contains that provision. We support the range of other provisions that are included in the bill, as I have outlined. But we will oppose the bill, because it contains those enabling provisions that will allow the government to progress its agenda of selling the assets of the people of Queensland without properly consulting them in an attempt to repair the finances of a government that has demonstrated itself to be incredibly incompetent. The bill before the House is not one that reflects credit on the minister or the government.

*(Time expired)*



**Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—LNP) (8.35 pm): I am pleased to rise to speak to the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010. I commend the shadow minister's summary of this bill. I thought it was a very good summary that went into a lot of detail. The shadow minister put a lot of thought into his contribution.

I think that this government should consider a lot of issues before this bill is passed, such as the impact that it is likely to have on the citizens of this state. I want to talk particularly about part 21 of the bill which contains amendments to the Water Act 2000, including a special provision for the Condamine and Balonne resource operations plan. That river system is located in my electorate and it is a very important part of Queensland's water and irrigation area.

I welcome this legislation and this amendment. This resource operations plan is one of the longest, most drawn-out plans in the history of water in this state. Unfortunately, if it had been completed six months ago it would have saved many landowners from financial difficulty. But its formulation went on and on and on. There was the opportunity for landholders to sell some of their water entitlements, particularly to the federal government. The federal government was offering incentives to buy water and this resource operations plan would have provided an opportunity for quite a few landholders. I have received many phone calls from people who wanted to do that, but they could not because this resource operations plan had not been passed. I understand that a court case was going on. It was certainly my opinion that the government should have settled that matter out of court and had it resolved many months ago.

This resource operations plan makes a further four per cent decrease in allocation to irrigators. We do not know exactly how that four per cent decrease is applied. Perhaps the minister could explain how that four per cent decrease will be applied. Is it across-the-board, or is it applied to certain categories of licences? Exactly how will that reduction of four per cent apply to the Condamine and Balonne resource operations plan?

Under the act, this ROP can be amended by the chief executive, or the Governor in Council. We certainly hope that these powers are used with discretion—that due consideration is given to individual property rights and that a full understanding of the consequences of the changes will be understood fully. In the past, those changes have not been understood. The Condamine and Balonne ROP was approved in December 2008. That is two years and three months ago. In fact, it was 10 to 12 years in the making so it has been a long, long time.

This is just one page of legislation in this bill of 282 pages. It is worth hundreds of millions of dollars to landholders' water entitlements that have been held up for many, many years. One can imagine the impact of that on commerce. We talk about creating jobs, creating certainty, wanting to improve our state and advance our nation, but we have had these hold-ups that have been going on and on. I will detail some of the reasons those hold-ups have occurred.

This resource operations plan is one of the few ROPs in this state based on genuine science. This Labor government took over in 1988, 12 years ago. It tried to cheat on the science and make political decisions on landholders' water entitlements. Labor wanted to use Labor science on the river system. Premier Beattie used all his persuasion skills—and he had some persuasion skills—to convince Queenslanders that the Condamine-Balonne river system was degraded and must be saved, particularly the Lower Balonne. He even went to the extreme of advancing dodgy salinity maps to show that the salt would erode our towns and even the railway line to St George.

**Mr Seeney:** Eat the railway line.

**Mr HOBBS:** There is no railway line to St George. He wanted to divert the Balonne Minor River into the Menindee Lakes. It is impossible to do that. He wanted to send water from North Queensland down the Thomson River near Longreach to the Murray-Darling.

**Mr Seeney:** The minister thought it was a great idea. He is hanging his head now.

**Mr HOBBS:** That is right. These are the geniuses who were in charge. They did not realise that the Thomson River runs into Lake Eyre. Getting it into the Murray-Darling Basin would require lifting the water a thousand feet and pumping it 250 kilometres. As it turned out, it would have had to be pumped into the river near me. It would have been great to have the water going down the river past my place.

**Mr Johnson:** The Thomson is running uphill.

**Mr HOBBS:** The Thomson is running uphill, as the member for Gregory says. These are the people who were in charge and were trying to manipulate the system.

**Mr Seeney:** Remember when we went looking for the salinity in Central Queensland?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Callide, come to order, please.

**Mr Hopper** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Condamine.

**Mr HOBBS:** The member for Callide challenged the minister at the time, Minister Robertson, to go out and show him where the salinity was. They hired an aeroplane, flew around and burnt lots of avgas but did not find any salinity.

**Mr Seeney:** A little patch as big as a table.

**Mr HOBBS:** I am sure the member for Condamine will expand on this in his contribution. Unfortunately, in relation to the Thomson, Beattie had the wrong catchment and the wrong river system.

The most important meeting in recent times was in Dirranbandi in about 2004. Then Premier Beattie was howled down by locals when he wanted to take over Cubbie Station and wanted to divert the water into Menindee Lakes. The outcome of that meeting was that Professor Peter Cullen, an eminent water specialist at the time, was appointed to an independent panel to examine the science. The locals were saying to the government that it was wrong on the science and that it was using political science, not real science. On that night, after much negotiation and a lot of argy-bargy, it was agreed to appoint Professor Cullen. When Professor Cullen looked at the numbers he said, 'Oh my God, I think they are right.' He went back to the raw data and found that most of the information provided was not correct. Everything started to improve from there. The landowners were right. They lived on the system and they understood it.

In fact, it was found that the Lower Balonne river system, which had a lot of irrigation on it, was in as good a condition as the Paroo River, where there was no irrigation, and the Warrego River, where there was very limited irrigation. There were the same sorts of invertebrates, fish and bugs that live in the water. The water quality was good. The system had not been degraded. It was only the political spin coming from the government that was saying how bad it was.

The landholders wanted to ensure they had a fair system. A particular landholder wanted a simple transfer of a water licence. This was a fairly basic process, but the government refused. The matter went to court. In the end the government was found to have only used science that suited it and to have misused data. It was found that the government scientists were not telling the truth. The government admitted defeat and withdrew. The case was won by the landholder and natural justice prevailed. Since then the government has been a bit gun-shy and generally common sense has prevailed on the Condamine-Balonne.

I truly wonder how other water catchments have fared and whether they have been duded or intimidated by this government. Some other catchments that did not obtain independent science have been unfairly treated. This parliament should know the cost, in monetary terms and in terms of personal sacrifice, of this battle to Queensland citizens. I commend the people of the towns and surrounding areas of St George and Dirranbandi who joined together and personally raised millions of dollars to fight a government that was supposed to be their friend and to help them and provide independent advice to make things fair. It did not do that. They had to provide their own money to fund private science to challenge the might of the government. A government should be able to be trusted and its citizens treated fairly. That did not happen.

Many years of negotiations, funding and fighting had to occur for landowners of the Lower Balonne around Dirranbandi and St George to achieve a fair deal. It took 10 to 12 years when it should have taken two, and it has taken a heavy toll on people's lives. This bill brings closure to this drawn-out, sorry process. I genuinely hope that no other community in Queensland has to go through such torture to achieve a simple fair go.

**Mr HOPPER** (Condamine—LNP) (8.48 pm): I listened with interest to the shadow minister. He stated that many pieces of legislation for which he has shadow responsibility were introduced on a Thursday night. The minister was always in hiding and people were going home. They wanted to shut down parliament so they did not have to face the music. Yet today, we see this legislation debated in the House on a Tuesday. It is ironic. There is no doubt that this is absolutely rushed legislation to be part of the asset sell-off of Queensland. This is to sell Forestry Plantations Queensland. The government has to have it in place before the sell-off can take place. That is what this legislation is all about.

I see the member for Mackay yawning on the other side of the House. I do not see his name on the speaking list. The reason he is not on the speaking list is that he is in hiding. This has now gone to Treasury. Why do we not hear the primary industries minister speak about what Forestry Plantations Queensland actually brought to the Queensland government? It is a money-making concern, yet it is being sold off. The government is selling the assets that produce money for Queensland. If Forestry Plantations Queensland is properly managed it is quite an asset, yet we are seeing it sold off.

This is part of the government's privatisation program. It is about selling Queensland. The other day I saw a car sticker that I thought was very good. The car sticker said, 'Go see Queensland before Bligh sells it'. What have we seen recently with Forestry Plantations Queensland, the Port of Brisbane and Abbot Point? What is going to happen to our agricultural colleges? A major announcement is coming up that they are going to sell college land in the Burdekin and in Dalby to put money into

consolidated revenue because of the \$85 billion debt in Queensland. What is the interest on that debt? It is about \$12 million every day that we wake up, which could pay for a new high school or hospital in every country town in Queensland. Every day we could build a new high school with the interest paid on the debt. This is to do with this bill because it is about the sell-off—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr O'Brien): Order! No, it is not. You will return to the provisions of the bill now, please.

**Mr HOPPER:** The bill is about the sell-off of Forestry Plantations Queensland to raise revenue for the state. Because of our unbelievable debt level, the government has to make sales. Therefore, it has put into this bill provisions to enable it to sell Forestry Plantations Queensland. As I said, the interest that we pay on that debt could have paid for new hospitals or high schools. That debt has been racked up by government members sitting opposite. Look at the backbenchers. Their heads are down in shame.

The bill talks about property boundaries. I will not go into that because the shadow minister covered it very well. This bill does not state that our land should be properly managed. When we take anything from someone, we must adequately compensate them. That is one thing that this government has never done. With tree clearing and the tree police, we have seen the robbery of people's assets. When you pay for something but have to give it up without compensation, that is theft.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Resume your seat, member for Condamine.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I think it is stretching the provisions of standing orders to refer to things that are not in the bill as constituting a debate of what is in the bill.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Just a moment, member for Condamine.

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! You will withdraw that. It is unparliamentary.

**Mr Seeney:** I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Condamine has the call.

**Mr HOPPER:** This shows the absolute arrogance of the minister, because the legislation refers to tree clearing and he does not even know it. He stood up, took a point of order and told me to speak about what is in the bill, but he does not even know that it is in the bill. It amends the Vegetation Management Act. This minister, who raised a point of order against me, is supposed to be across the legislation. We have seen this time and time again. Every bit of legislation that the member for Callide has had to face has been brought in on a Thursday afternoon because this is a minister in hiding. This legislation is before the House tonight because it has to be rushed through so that the government can sell off Forestry Plantations Queensland.

I was talking about compensation. When you take away something that someone has adequately paid for but you do not compensate them for it, that is theft. The bill talks about many things. How will these forestry plantations be managed when they are privatised but the government still owns the land? We know how the government has looked after its land in the past. We have dingoes, feral pigs and a whole host of other feral animals, there are no fire breaks and nothing has been put in place to manage the land. What mechanisms will be put in place to protect the land? Where will the fire controls be?

The bill refers to the Condamine and Balonne rivers. The member for Warrego covered that and the member for Gregory may speak about it. When former Premier Peter Beattie went out to Dirranbandi to look at Cubbie Station, I had never seen so much spin in all my born days. It was spin, spin, spin, spin. Other things that are being sold off include Queensland Rail and research stations in North Queensland. The member for Mackay is selling Forestry Plantations Queensland. The only tropical dairy herd in Queensland was sold at the height of the dairy market when cows were worth \$3,000 each. The government capitalised on that. We have asked a few questions on notice about that issue and I eagerly await the answers to those questions. How much money was made on that sale and where will the revenue go? Now we hear that the agricultural colleges are going.

Forestry Plantations Queensland is being sold as a 99-year lease and trees are a long-term investment, so the structure is short-sighted. All current joint ventures and contracts will be transferred to the new entity and the land will remain in government hands. That is one of the problems that we see here. What about the public's right to access land when a private company owns what is on the land? That company has rights too. Let us say a mining company comes to explore your property. It puts down a drilling rig to drill for gas, coal or whatever. Tape is put up and people have no access to that area. Even though you own that land, you cannot go near it because of the arrangement that has been made. In this case, what access rights will people have? People are concerned about the government's commitment to the continued right of access for the public in state forestry plantations. The government

has announced that it is committed to public access, but for how long? We can stand in parliament and talk about it, but where is the actual commitment to ensuring that this happens? I have seen this before. When horse riders or others who use the state forests for recreation impact on the new owner's use of the asset, will the government's commitment continue? I do not think so. It cannot even remove feral pigs.

The new owners will have to abide by the good neighbour principles. What are the good neighbour principles? They have been largely ignored by this government. The good neighbour principles have been pushed to the side. A lack of pest, weed and fire management have long been issues for people who own land neighbouring government land, such as state forests or national parks. I note the requirement to fence forestry land is expressly removed by this bill. The government is going to leave it up to the poor old bloke who lives next door to look after the land. That is exactly what will happen.

I note that forestry officers will continue to exercise delegated power that will impact on users of the state forest. There are appeal and objection processes. Didn't we see that with tree clearing and the tree police? Send the boys out, give them a bit of authority and bang! Who gets crucified? Who gets hurt? It is the property owners, the neighbours and the people of Queensland. As Queenslanders we own those assets. Our rights are being taken away by this legislation, which is being rushed through the House tonight to allow the sell-off of our assets. I see you smiling, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Your comment is a reflection on the chair and you will withdraw.

**Mr HOPPER:** I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker. This is about raising revenue for government because of the horrific debt that we are in and the horrific interest that every man, woman and child in Queensland will have to pay every day. Our grandchildren will be faced with this debt. It is beyond belief. It removes the restriction that a natural resource agreement is not an interest in land. It changes the law so that the ownership of trees can create an interest in the land. That is what this bill does. It provides security for the landholders who are entering into agreements for the use of plantations in the voluntary carbon market. We have a few questions that we would like the minister to answer. One of those questions is: how will this interest in land be compatible with the fact that forestry plantations are going to be subject to a lease? They are going to be subject to a lease. If the lease is not renewed, will this interest in the land through the carbon market remain with the previous lessee or be transferred?

This legislation that has been brought into the House tonight is absolutely ludicrous. It is rushed legislation. I would love for the member for Mackay, the Minister for Primary Industries, to speak to this bill and give us his spin on it and tell us how he agrees with this sell-off, as he is selling off all of the rest of the assets of Primary Industries in Queensland. God help Queensland!

**Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (9.00 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill amends a number of acts within the jurisdiction of the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade. From the outset, I would like to commend the minister, his staff and the departmental officers on their respective contributions to this bill.

This bill is about providing certainty for the people of Queensland. This bill clarifies a number of matters for Queenslanders—for instance, this bill removes confusion about the location of ambulatory boundaries, clarifies the lateral extent of the management powers of the states in non-tidal watercourse areas and reduces regulatory duplication under the Vegetation Management Act. This bill also provides certainty to water users in the Lower Balonne by finalising the Condamine and Balonne resource operations plan. This certainty is provided by a number of amendments to the Water Act. I would like to spend some time considering those particular amendments.

The Water Act establishes the framework for the sustainable allocation and management of the state's water resources principally through the preparation of water resource plans and resource operations plans. Water resource plans aim to provide secure water allocations and allow for future sustainable development while ensuring environmental flows are considered to protect the health of Queensland's rivers. Resource operations plans are the day-to-day operational plans used to implement water resource plans.

In 2008 the Water Act was amended to provide a process for a draft resource operations plan to be finalised in stages. This allowed for the timely finalisation of part of a draft resource operations plan where circumstances may have arisen that may otherwise delay the finalisation of the whole plan. The Lower Balonne provisions of the draft Condamine and Balonne resource operations plan were deferred from finalisation under these provisions in December 2008 to enable the completion of an outstanding judicial review legal proceeding. This resulted in the ROP only covering the upper and middle Condamine catchments. Although the Supreme Court found in favour of the department and dismissed the judicial review application, it is critical that the Lower Balonne provisions for the ROP be finalised without delay.

While the Lower Balonne provisions remain unfinalised, the water users in the Lower Balonne area continue to be at a disadvantage as compared to other water users in the catchment who have had their water entitlements converted to tradeable water allocations. These water users have waited patiently for the Supreme Court to confirm that the department's methodologies and decisions in preparing the draft provisions for the Lower Balonne were robust. These water users are the only major water users in the Murray-Darling Basin who do not have secure water access entitlements and, while the Lower Balonne provisions remain unfinalised, they cannot participate in the Commonwealth government's water entitlement buyback program to achieve improved environmental outcomes for the Murray-Darling Basin.

In addition, the Murray-Darling Basin plan, being developed under the Commonwealth's Water Act 2007, is scheduled to be in place by June 2011, following an anticipated release of a draft in June 2010, and is expected to set long-term average sustainable diversion limits on water that can be taken from surface and groundwater systems across the basin, including the Condamine and the Balonne catchment. This bill amends the Water Act 2000 to provide for the much needed finalisation of the Lower Balonne provisions for the Condamine and Balonne ROP. Upon this bill receiving royal assent, the amendment will commence and subsequently the Condamine and Balonne ROP will be amended to include the Lower Balonne provisions.

Extensive consultations were taken over a period of several years during the preparation of the draft Condamine and Balonne ROP and prior to finalising the ROP, giving interested parties opportunities to provide input. This included public release of the notice of intention to prepare the draft ROP and submissions on the draft ROP. This finalisation will provide certainty to water users and the environment and deliver the necessary creation of particular tradeable water entitlements in the area to provide the flexibility for these entitlement holders to participate in the Commonwealth government's water entitlement buyback program.

The conversion of particular existing entitlements to water allocations and the Lower Balonne provisions will commence on the day the ROP is made. As mentioned earlier, this is the day that the proposed legislative amendment, if passed, receives royal assent. Once finalised, the ROP will define water allocations, trading and operating rules and water monitoring. The plan will also enhance protection for the environment by keeping more water in the river during significant flows and will provide for the health of rivers, flood plains and wetlands, including the internationally recognised lake areas in the lower part of the system.

The finalised ROP will provide rules that facilitate both temporary—seasonal assignments—and permanent water trading. Incidentally, the current flows into the Lower Balonne system, which runs into the lakes area and the upper Darling river system, are the highest on record, with more than 250 gegalitres per day flowing through St George, which is at the upstream end. I would like to confirm that the finalised Lower Balonne provisions will not have any retrospective effect on the take of water that has already occurred during the current flow event in the Lower Balonne prior to the day of the ROP commencement. The ROP rules will apply to flows from the day of commencement of the finalised ROP. The majority of unsupplemented water entitlements at the commencement of the ROP will be under an instantaneous water-sharing rule. This is a key feature of the finalised Condamine and Balonne water resource plan.

I would like to conclude by restating that the water users of the Lower Balonne area have waited long enough for the finalisation of the ROP that will deliver the conversion of particular entitlements to tradeable allocations. The finalised ROP delivers to these water users and the Lower Balonne community access to the security and flexibility already provided to the other catchments within the Condamine and Balonne area. This is a good bill which provides certainty and clarity to Queenslanders and it is worthy of the support of all members of this House. I have no hesitation in commending the bill to the House.

**Mr HOOLIHAN** (Keppel—ALP) (9.08 pm): In dealing with the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I would like to thank the minister, and his advisers particularly, for bringing this bill forward. It clears up one of the greyest areas in relation to boundaries in Queensland, and that is the ambulatory boundaries. We heard much of ambulatory boundaries from the member for Callide. But it is quite an amount of legislation. In fact, I thought it was quite instructive to read the explanatory notes where it mentions the case of *Svendsen v State of Queensland & Anor*, which was a decision on a boundary which is at the southern end of my electorate. It leads to Svendsens Beach, where we have a boat ramp on Cawarral Creek.

It is noted in the explanatory notes that 234 lots along the Queensland coast and rivers were resurveyed after that case of *Svendsen*, but the biggest difficulty has been with erosion and accretion of land and the resurveying of land. In some instances—and in a number of instances even in my own electorate—people have resurveyed land to include accretions on beachfront land and in actual fact have extended their ownership to land along the beach. I do not believe that anyone in Queensland would accept that that is a valid operation of any law. The provisions of this bill in relation to those boundaries will clear up much of that grey area.

What it does, particularly for tidal boundaries, is identify a feature on the current survey plan that will be the same feature that is used to identify that boundary. It will not be, as is currently the case, according to the individual surveyor as to what feature is actually used. There are other provisions for non-tidal watercourse boundaries. I think the majority of people who do not have any knowledge of land law would find some difficulty in understanding why this is necessary, but for those people who do have some knowledge of land law it is necessary. It has been necessary for a long period of time, and this bill will allow those matters to be addressed.

In relation to the other matters, there has been much ado about nothing in relation to certain other provisions, particularly in relation to the Forestry Act. I would not presume to repeat some of the matters that I mentioned this afternoon, but I think some of the arguments that have been put forward bear out what I said in a previous debate. I believe this bill gives Queenslanders certainty. It gives Queenslanders knowledge of how the law applies to them, and I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—LNP) (9.12 pm): In speaking to the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010, I think the House has heard the direction that the opposition will be taking on this legislation. There are a few aspects of it that I want to canvass. I think this is a very complex piece of legislation. The most important factor with any land title is the security of the lease in question. We have seen many times from this government amendments to legislation. We have seen the violation, I believe, of the sanctity of what freehold legislation is all about. We have seen that happen in this House as a result of some of the policies of this government.

When we talk about leasehold legislation, I represent a very large tract of western Queensland where there is a lot of leasehold land. Those leases are very important to those landholders in question. In dry, arid, western areas it is very important that people have security over those leases so they can plan for the long term, as they get only one or two good seasons in 10 or 15. Thank the Lord we are enjoying a very good one at the moment not only in the far west but also in the vast majority of our great state, and I hope it continues for many years to come.

The real issue here is the duty of care. If we talk about the duty of care with leases, I believe the duty of care is a given. When we talk about looking after land, whether it is freehold or leasehold, it is very important that the lessor is able to get on with the business of productivity that is derived from that land—whether it is growing grain, whether it is the production of livestock or whether it is the production of timber. The one real fact is the management strategies that are applicable. We talk about looking after the land and eliminating foreign flora and fauna such as feral animals and noxious weeds and plants that are a hindrance to these properties, but the government has to get its own backyard in order in relation to national parks.

National parks are a very contentious area, I believe, in the management strategies of Queensland. When we see good operations downstream from national parks where they are trying to control noxious plants—whether it be parthenium weed, rubber vine or any of those awful plants that destroy the fabric of our rural lands—I think the government has to start being fair dinkum about addressing this issue.

The other day I drove between Clermont and Emerald. When people look at those magnificent pastures they are probably thinking, 'God, there is a good crop here,' but I saw parthenium weed that was that high—as high as it will grow. It will grow a bit higher yet. It will get up to around six feet. A lot of people would think this is a good crop and think these blokes are doing very well, but it is rendering that beautiful farming land absolutely useless. If you rub on it you will get an itch for weeks. I do not say this lightly, but some people are very vulnerable when it comes to parthenium, lantana and those types of plants.

**Mr Malone:** Rat's tail.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I take the interjection from the honourable member for Mirani. I know that time and time again the Minister for Primary Industries talks about issues of biosecurity. Now that we have seen a winding back in the operations of the great department of primary industries, biosecurity is something that I think the government needs to do some more homework on. I know that the minister who is responsible for national parks is not in the House, but I believe this area will work in conjunction with this legislation through the department of natural resources.

I think that management strategies which grow a cause between the lessees and Indigenous people are a good purpose of this legislation. I agree with it. There is one aspect that we are revisiting in some of these cultural heritage areas. I heard the shadow minister comment tonight on the extraction agreements between cultural heritage and Indigenous people. It is a very important function for those people to be able to operate the leases that they have. When we talk about cultural heritage, it defines some very technical things in relation to taking gravel, sand or water. It is important that no further impediments are put in the way of these people so that they can progress their cause. I think there is

enough hindrance there now. The real issue, as I see it, is the importance if there are amendments from time to time to legislation like this of not having a further shutdown of the activities that they are able to uphold.

I would like to touch on section 61, which will be amended to allow for the terms of trustee leases and trustee subleases over operational DOGITs to be for a maximum term of up to 100 years. This is a good aspect. It is an aspect which, again, comes back to natural management issues. It lets people plan for the long term. It lets them get on with whatever their operations might be. This is absolutely paramount when we are encouraging people to be productive with their land and making certain that they can get on with their business. They can have a long-term business plan, and this is an important function.

Another area I want to touch on is the issue of non-tidal watercourses. The Water Act is a very contentious act. There is no doubt about that. We have seen a lot of argument, a lot of misunderstanding, a lot of misquotes and a lot of innuendo in relation to water. When you live in the part of the world where I live, in western Queensland, those watercourses are very sacred.

I put on the record again here tonight that using the rivers in the far west of this state for irrigation purposes is an absolute no-no because it is a natural environment. Members can call me a conservationist, a greenie or whatever, but when it comes to those western rivers they are not negotiable for the purpose of irrigation. We have a pristine environment out there. We will see the flow through from the recent flooding in the Thomson, Barcoo, the Cooper system, the Diamantina and Georgina system down to Lake Eyre and into the Goongee Lakes before it gets further into South Australia and into the Strezlecki. The important thing to remember is that this environment is going to thrive again.

**Mr Cripps:** It is just not appropriate.

**Mr JOHNSON:** Of course it is not appropriate. I take the interjection from the honourable member for Hinchinbrook. I, along with people on the government side and on this side, vehemently opposed the prospect of people wanting to grow cotton on the Cooper at Windorah. What a tragedy that would have been. We can take all the water we like off the back of big floods but, at the end of the day, that water is going to create life somewhere else—whether it is a rare type of marine species that lives in that area or some sort of plant that might see water once in 20 years. This is what it is all about. This is what we have to protect.

I know that the government in its wisdom before the last election created the wild rivers system to take in the Georgina and Diamantina system and the Cooper Creek system. The important thing to remember though is that those people who run pastoral operations in that country are very good managers. If the job is not right they destock. If the job is right they stock responsibly. The management strategies should be about protecting the environment.

The same can be said in relation to the Indigenous people who have access to lands whether in the west of the state, the Far North of the state or wherever. Importantly, we need to allow our Indigenous brothers and sisters to be able to move with purpose in those areas, and I will mention a great little project that is underway in Hope Vale. There are a thousand hectares of land where they can grow their own crops like bananas. They are being productive. It is all about enhancing the opportunity for these people to move forward, to progress the cause, to show their worth and the value of their communities and operations and not be hindered.

I say to the minister today—he is not in the House at the moment—that we have to make absolutely certain with these pieces of legislation that when we talk about protection we also talk about enhancement. That enhancement opportunity is something that I believe is sacred to the ongoing viability and longevity of these areas. At the end of the day, these people have been running these places for hundreds of years. They operate in the same environment that we operate in now. I think they are good managers and know the issues.

I now want to talk about the restructure of the Forestry Act 1959, and I would like the minister to comment on this. Page 20 of the explanatory notes states—

*Whether legislation has sufficient regard to rights and liberties of individuals by having sufficient regard to Aboriginal tradition and Island custom ...*

The grant of a plantation licence in respect of the SPF may have native title implications. Advice from Crown Law was obtained in relation to this issue. The Bill does not extinguish native title rights. Further, the grant of a plantation licence under the proposed provisions is the grant of a non-exclusive licence and does not extinguish native title rights. Native title holders remain entitled to seek compensation under the *Native Title (Queensland) Act 1993* and the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth). Thus, it is submitted that the Bill has sufficient regard to Aboriginal tradition and Island custom.

Again we see native title rear its head. I would like the minister to clarify that there is not a complexity involved here that is going to cause angst or heartache to someone down the track. Whilst we trust the great majority of people in the relevant authorities to draw up legislation, there is certainly some small print from time to time that creates a great deal of angst and uncertainty. We have to make certain that these issues are clarified.

The other issue that I want to touch on quickly is non-tidal watercourses. Non-tidal watercourses in rural and regional Queensland where boundaries are determined can change from time to time. I say with some sadness that we witnessed floods in Charleville recently. The council has gone to great pains and great lengths to try to prevent the flooding of that town. This flood has had a disastrous effect on the town. There were homes flooded this time that have not been flooded before. I feel for the council. I feel for my very good friend the Mayor of Murweh Shire Council, Councillor Mark O'Brien. These people do an excellent job in executing their duties and in terms of what they are trying to achieve. I hope that the current government and the Murweh Shire Council and those other towns that are subject to this type of flooding can find a cure for this. Maybe it will cost a lot of money to work this out. It is all very well to play the blame game but, at the end of the day, common sense should prevail. As the late Harvey Firestone, the man who invented the inner pneumatic tube, said, 'You don't fix a problem by throwing money at it; you have to throw brains and science at it first.' That is right.

All floods are different. These boundaries—whether it is on a watercourse or river—can change from time to time. When we determine outcomes such as this we have to be responsible in the way we go about our business. As the shadow minister said, when in doubt we should throw the legislation out and not support it. We have these uncertainties. That is exactly where I stand with this legislation.

**Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (9.27 pm): I, too, rise to speak briefly in the debate on the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010. As my good colleague the member for Gregory just mentioned, the LNP is opposing this bill, and I am pleased about that. For the second time today we are seeing legislation being rushed through this House to facilitate the sale of Forestry Plantations Queensland.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr POWELL:** I will get to the rush in a minute; just give me a moment. I have put on the record quite considerably my opposition to the sale of Forestry Plantations Queensland and particularly my concern regarding the conditions that are going to be imposed on the workers of that organisation, and I will talk about that later.

I would like to briefly begin by touching on the amendments to the Water Act. These changes are certainly welcome. I have had quite a few constituents over the 12 months that I have been in this role raise their concerns about the varying definitions of watercourses. In my electorate it is less to do with tidal and more to do with non-tidal watercourses. The explanatory notes go into some detail about this. There is quite a level of disagreement among the definitions. It is good to see that this will clarify exactly what is within a property and what is not within a property. It moves away from natural flow which is excellent. It gives some certainty to the property owners, but it also gives some certainty to the landholders' riparian rights. I acknowledge that the minister stated in his second reading speech—

For land with a non-tidal watercourse boundary, a change to a boundary on resurvey will not diminish a landholder's riparian rights in any way. Landowners adjoining a watercourse will still be able to take water for stock and domestic purposes, exercise the right of access and bring action against trespassers.

I think this part of the bill is actually a very welcome part. It does give that clarity around definition that most landholders are seeking while still acknowledging their riparian rights and their access to that riparian area.

I would also like to briefly echo the concerns of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee with regard to amendments to the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 and the Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003. I note that the explanatory notes suggest this is to amend the definition of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander native title party for an area to put beyond doubt the identity of the native title party for cultural and heritage purposes in the situation where there are two or more previously registered claimants for an area.

I would touch on the concerns that the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee raised in its *Legislation Alert* around the fact that this may not have respect to Aboriginal tradition and island custom. When I referred earlier to the bill being rushed through, one of my principal concerns is that the committee has asked the minister to address the fact that the legislation may not give consideration to Aboriginal tradition or island custom. We as a committee would have received a response from the minister on those questions. We are clearly not going to be given the opportunity to do so. It would be appreciated if in his summing-up the minister could make some effort to address the concerns raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, particularly on pages 11 and 12 of *Legislation Alert No. 4 of 2010*.



Finally, let me return very briefly, as I have already spoken once on this today, to my concerns around the changes to the Forestry Act 1959, its regulations and certain other acts. The changes are quite extensive. Some would say they are good in the sense that they will ensure there is continued access to forestry plantation land once the sale goes through. There is certainty for apiarists and other recreational users of that land. Again the question is: why are we rushing this through? We know that the sale is going through and that is why we are rushing it through.

I would like to refer briefly to the comments made by the member for Yeerongpilly in relation to my speech earlier today. He said that if Forestry Plantations Queensland workers have concerns I should be bringing them to him or the minister. Let me say that if the union representing those Forestry Plantations Queensland workers is not getting the outcomes it is expecting from its meetings with the minister, with the parliamentary secretary or with anyone else involved in this then I am seriously concerned that I would be wasting the time of the workers in my electorate by bringing them to see the parliamentary secretary.

**Mr Finn:** More effective.

**Mr POWELL:** I will certainly endeavour to take the member for Yeerongpilly up on his request to bring them to him to have their concerns raised. They are concerns around the conditions of employment that they will have following the sale of Forestry Plantations Queensland, particularly the issue that they may be asked or forced to relocate their place of work. Obviously I have workshops in Beerburrum and also nurseries around Glass House Mountains. If they are going to be shut down and staff are expected to move to Toolara to the east of Gympie, that is going to have seriously detrimental impacts on those workers and their families.

**Mr Finn:** It's been rumoured for 10 years.

**Mr POWELL:** Here is an opportunity to dismiss the rumour once and for all and ensure that those workers have that certainty about where their workplace will be. I hope this sale is not an excuse to shut down those facilities in Beerburrum or Glass House Mountains and shift those staff away from that area, taking their families with them. With those few comments, I would like to confirm my support for the member for Callide and his comments. As I said, I am pleased that the LNP will be opposing this bill.

**Mr MALONE (Mirani—LNP) (9.33 pm):** It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010. I will speak only briefly on the matter because I believe that the shadow minister has covered the technical issues very well indeed. Our position obviously is that we will be opposing this legislation.

From my perspective as a landholder and a person who has been in the industry for a long period, the sale of Forestry Plantations Queensland and the facilitation of this legislation to allow that to happen is a real concern to me. Forestry plantations are, I believe, a critical asset and should be retained in government ownership at all costs. From my perspective, they are one of the key assets of the Queensland government. Quite frankly, I cannot really understand why this government would be selling such a significant asset that has huge opportunities for employment and the development of a green industry for Queensland. To allow private investors to come in and gain the benefit of generations of timber workers who have built up this forestry asset is beyond belief. The previous speaker indicated the real concerns of people who work in the forestry industry about their ability to retain employment and not be impacted upon negatively by this sale.

Of course there are many other issues to be concerned about in relation to forestry such as the opportunity for recreational users to maintain their use of the forestry plantations. That is quite significant. I am wondering if the private ownership of those forestry plantations will still enable recreational users to participate in their chosen sport in the forest. As I said, the legislation facilitates that sale. For that reason alone I am totally opposed to the passage of this legislation through the House tonight.

I turn now to other issues that have been raised in the debate on the bill tonight. In terms of leasehold land, again as a landholder I am desperately concerned about the way in which this government manages not only its forestry leases but also its national parks. As previously stated in the House, the management of feral animals, wild dogs, pigs et cetera in the forestry areas and national parks is an absolute disgrace. When you look at the wild fauna and the exotic fauna that is emanating from national parks such as giant rat's tail and lantana and all of those pests intruding on to private land with little maintenance by the staff of the Queensland government, you really have to wonder where the management role of the Queensland government is in all of this.

The legislation has impacts in terms of DOGITs, and that is really a step forward for the Aboriginal and Islander communities, and that is very positive I believe. However, it does not detract from a lot of the negatives contained in this legislation.

In terms of ambulatory boundaries, obviously any electorate that is on coastal land or on a coastal plain will find that its boundaries that are bounded by the middle of a stream, low bank or high bank can change dramatically. Over the last few weeks obviously in North Queensland a lot of those boundaries have changed quite dramatically. However, I am not quite certain that giving the discretion to the minister is the right way of doing it. I would be the first to admit that there are problems there, but I am not sure whether departmental staff under the discretion of the minister are the right people to be making those decisions.

Even though there are some areas in the bill that I can support, there are other areas that totally override any consideration of support for the bill. I support the shadow minister in opposing this bill.

**Mrs SULLIVAN** (Pumicestone—ALP) (9.38 pm): In rising to participate in the debate on the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 introduced into this House earlier this year, I would like to concentrate my remarks on non-tidal watercourses in terms of management jurisdiction and property boundaries. But first I will give some background to the current legislation.

The Water Act 2000 provides a definition of watercourse which includes bed, banks and other elements of a river, creek or stream that confine or contain water. The Water Act also defines bed and banks to be land over which water normally flows excluding adjacent land that would be covered during a flood. The act also states that the bed and banks of a watercourse forming the boundary of a lot are the property of the state.

There are two issues that prompted the need to change the Water Act. Firstly, various interpretations of the phrase 'bed and banks' has created uncertainty about the extent of the state's jurisdiction in relation to watercourses. Secondly, there was some uncertainty for landholders as to whether the surveyed ambulatory boundary of their lot accurately depicted their land and that owned by the state. That uncertainty about the extent of the state's jurisdiction in a watercourse has resulted in confusion and sometimes disputes. For example, people wishing to undertake activities in or near a watercourse were unsure if they were required to obtain resource allocations, say, for quarry materials or a riverine protection permit. In some cases, the issue of jurisdiction was taken to the courts for resolution.

To clarify the land in a watercourse over which the Water Act applies, the act is being changed to better define the term 'watercourse'. The new definition will state that a watercourse extends to its outer banks. The outer banks are defined as the point where the stream channel intersects with any adjacent flood plain or valley margin. The changes will also clarify that a watercourse includes sandbars, in-stream islands and benches. The specific inclusion of sandbars, in-stream islands and benches will reinforce that a watercourse is more than the low-flow channel on the bed.

Clarifying that the watercourse is the land between the outer banks and providing diagrams in regulations will remove confusion about to which bank the watercourse extends. Also, defining a watercourse by reference to flood plains and valley margins will help people to see them in a larger landscape context. Appropriate and equitable transitional arrangements are also provided by the bill so that, for any activities in a watercourse that may be affected by the clarified definitions, people will have six months to apply for the necessary resource allocations and permits, if not already held.

Providing greater certainty will save significant time and resources for the community and the government in the future by, firstly, reducing the risk of an authorised water extraction and activities occurring in the watercourses due to uncertainty about the need for resource allocations and riverine protection permits; secondly, reducing the potential impact on the rights of other resource users and on resource conditions, including ecosystem health, which can arise from unauthorised water extraction and activities; and, thirdly, reducing disputes and therefore reducing the need for people to seek court rulings to determine the jurisdictional boundary of a watercourse.

To separate tenure issues from the state's jurisdiction, the provisions deeming land within a boundary watercourse to be the property of the state will be moved from the Water Act to the Land Act. The Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act is being amended to provide clear criteria for identifying a suitable physical feature within a watercourse to be the ambulatory boundary of a lot. The bill also recognises existing ambulatory boundary surveys regardless of what feature was used for them.

In the past, cadastral surveyors have adopted a relatively narrow interpretation of bed and banks, which has resulted in some lots having their ambulatory boundary inside the watercourse. However, there have been disputes as to whether such a survey plan was accurate or had incorporated watercourse land which was, in fact, the property of the state. For quarry operators, that meant that they were unsure if they had to pay royalties to the state for material taken from part of the lot. For landholders, they were unsure if they had the right of exclusion for quarry operations, or for their land being ponded by another person's weir. By providing clearer criteria for the selection of a physical feature within a watercourse to be the basis of an ambulatory boundary, there will be greater certainty that the boundary as surveyed and mapped is representative of the lot.

Although the criteria are different from those used in the selection of tidal boundaries, the same applies. Formally recognising existing boundaries will provide security for existing landholders and those boundaries will remain until they are resurveyed. Resurvey will generally occur only if the landholder chooses to reconfigure the land parcel. Irrespective of any change in the boundary, the landholder continues to enjoy riparian rights over the state land in the watercourse. Those rights include the near-exclusive use of the land and waters for stock and domestic purposes and will allow the landholder to exclude trespassers.

By separating the tenure and jurisdiction issues, any confusion about the state's power to regulate activity within watercourses and the person's ownership of land adjoining boundary watercourses is removed. Providing greater certainty to landholders, developers, surveyors, consultants and even local governments, state agencies and the courts will save significant time and resources in the future.

This is a significant bill as it will consign to history the uncertainty that has plagued boundary and jurisdictional issues in watercourses since 1910, when land boundaries were moved from being to the centre of the watercourse. Moving away from a flow based definition of bed and banks to a physical feature based definition will remove the significant effort and cost of having to undertake hydrologic studies each time to determine the normal flow and hydraulic studies to determine the lateral extents of that theoretical flow. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs ATTWOOD** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (9.44 pm): In rising to participate in the debate on the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010, I would like to address the reasons we are introducing a new tidal ambulatory boundary scheme and its features. Some six years ago it came to the attention of the government that some landowners whose land adjoined Queensland's beaches were resurveying their properties to include significantly more land, including what most of us would consider to be public beach, into their properties. The law at the time actually allowed this to happen, even though it had not been normal practice in the past. In the past, surveyors would often survey the boundary of land adjoining beaches or other tidal land to the edge of the usable land, usually signified by a natural feature, such as the toe of a stable dune. This natural feature was readily surveyed, easily understood by the landowner and people generally accepted that that was where their properties ended and the public beach began.

In November 2005, the government amended the Land Title Act 1994 and the Land Act 1994 to place a temporary stay on the registration of survey plans with these tidal boundaries so that it could develop a long-term solution to the concern about landowners taking beach land into private ownership. The practice of resurveying and incorporating extra land into survey plans began in earnest after a High Court decision in 1999, which, in essence, determined that land with an ambulatory boundary bounded by the high-water mark could be represented by the mean high-water springs. For some properties, that meant that the new survey plan now showed a significantly greater land area than the original survey. In some cases, the boundaries of the lot had been extended to include what most of us would consider to be public beaches and foreshores.

An ambulatory boundary is where a body of water, sea or river defines a boundary of land. Ambulatory boundaries are identified on a deed of grant or survey plan for referencing a body of water that adjoins a parcel of land. For example, the ambulatory boundary may be identified by making reference to the left bank of the Maroochy River or the Coral Sea. The location of an ambulatory boundary may shift through gradual and imperceptible movement, also known as erosion and accretion. Under the amendments in this bill, the location of the tidal ambulatory boundary will be the natural feature as located on a landowner's current survey plan. This recognises the past common practice of surveyors in identifying these boundaries and generally locates the boundary of the land at the place where a landowner looking at their survey plan would expect it to be. A natural feature in the tidal context may include the landward edge of mangroves, the seaward edge of a grassy dune or even the stable toe of a dune.

The ambulatory boundary provisions in this bill do not change the common law in relation to ambulatory boundaries, which is that ambulatory boundaries shift over time by gradual and imperceptible degrees—that is erosion and accretion—and that ambulatory boundaries affected by a sudden change from a flood, storm or human intervention will not shift from where they were prior to the sudden change event.

Under the new scheme proposed by the bill, if it is not possible to determine from an earlier plan of survey which natural feature was used to survey the boundary, the surveyor must use specified tidal boundary location criteria to identify the most appropriate natural feature. Under these criteria, this natural feature must be in a position that achieves stability and sustainability and is consistent with the public interest. To determine the location of a tidal ambulatory boundary, certain criteria must be met. It must not be subject to tidal inundation under any combination of astronomical conditions and average meteorological conditions; be located on the landward side of any sandy beaches, foredunes, mangroves, seagrass, intertidal flats et cetera; be consistent with the public interest; be in a stable

location and not require construction to keep it safe from inundation or obliteration; and be the natural feature unless there is no feature in reasonable proximity. If the location is unstable or a natural feature cannot be located then the tidal boundary must be on the landward side of any sandy beach or dune and any active erosion areas with no natural vegetation. These criteria are essentially consistent with the way in which tidal ambulatory boundaries were considered for registration under the provisions of the stay.

For many difficult places, including those where the land has been substantially modified, the chief executive may declare the location of the boundary. Before making a declaration decision, the chief executive must ensure that the proposed boundary satisfies the first three tidal boundary location criteria and must take reasonable steps to consult with all registered owners or lessees of the land. A declaration decision is subject to internal review and appeal. The new survey definitions will retain the beach in public ownership and ensure there is much greater clarity in determining the location of a tidal boundary of land. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Attwood, adjourned.

## ADJOURNMENT

**Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (9.52 pm): I move—  
That the House do now adjourn.

### Violence Against Police

**Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (9.52 pm): In the early hours of last Saturday morning two police officers were seriously assaulted in Innisfail by two men and a woman who have subsequently been charged with a variety of offences, including numerous counts of serious assault and grievous bodily harm. One of the police officers was knocked unconscious and suffered a broken jaw and underwent surgery yesterday, while his colleague has suffered swelling and bruising to his head and ribs.

These assaults are totally unacceptable and I offer my support to the two police officers involved and their families on behalf of the local community which I believe is equally shocked and alarmed that yet another act of violence has been directed towards police officers in the district. It saddens me that this has occurred in a community that I represent. I am absolutely appalled by these assaults. I will not sit back and watch this sort of violence occur without addressing the issue. Ordinarily an incident like this would be considered out of character for communities in the Cassowary Coast region. However, along with the assault on a police officer that occurred in November 2009 at Mission Beach, the assaults on these two police officers on the weekend are signs that this is changing.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Hinchinbrook, just be careful. If this has to go to court you might use the words 'alleged assault'.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Certainly, Mr Speaker. Unfortunately, the larger provincial cities in the region—Cairns and Townsville—have a history of violence and are known to be hotspots for violence against police. Police really fulfil a challenging public service role for the benefit and safety of the community. An assault on a police officer in the course of doing their duty is totally unacceptable. It shows a lack of respect for the law in our community.

Police officers do their job in very demanding situations. We ask our police to deal with some of the most violent and dangerous people in our community and enforce the law on our behalf. If the law is to be respected, the people with the responsibility of enforcing the law should also be respected. Failure to do so should have serious consequences. A clear message needs to be sent that this behaviour will not be tolerated.

This morning the minister for police had an opportunity to make a ministerial statement about the issue but he failed to do so even in these extraordinary circumstances where an officer has allegedly been assaulted to the point where they have had their jaw broken and have had to undergo surgery. This issue cannot be ignored by the police minister and the government.

The LNP opposition previously introduced a private member's bill into the Queensland parliament to provide for mandatory sentences of at least three months jail for anyone convicted of an assault against a police officer in Queensland. The coalition government in Western Australia has introduced mandatory sentences for people who assault police officers. That has sent a clear message to would-be offenders. Once again the LNP has introduced a private member's bill into the parliament to provide for mandatory sentences against police. The LNP is really giving the state Labor government a second chance to support police officers and to put petty political differences aside and send a message to the community that this behaviour is unacceptable. The police officers in our community deserve our support.

**Blake, Mrs B**

**Ms MALE** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (9.54 pm): I rise today to speak on the sad passing of a leader in the Pine Rivers community, Mrs Betty Blake. While I did not have the honour of personally knowing Betty Blake, I would like to acknowledge the great legacy that she has left behind in Pine Rivers. Betty moved to the Pine Rivers area in 1987 to enjoy a quiet and peaceful retirement with her husband, Tom Blake. At this time, the Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre was being established and Betty offered her assistance to the project. A founding member of the centre, Betty also established the community information and referral service and used her skills as a former legal secretary in New South Wales to write funding submissions for the centre. Betty also oversaw many activities and was secretary to the management committee.

In 1994 Betty succeeded in one of her biggest achievements: she led a successful campaign to raise money for a new building at the centre which was desperately needed for its growing services. This building is named in her honour, recognising her commitment to the community, and is now known as the Betty Blake Building. In 2003 Betty also became the first life member of the Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Association in recognition of her work within the association.

In 1995 Betty was also recognised for the assistance that she provided to people in need by receiving a Premier's Award Certificate of Achievement. In 1996 Betty, along with David Horstmann, current president of Youth Care Pine Rivers, and Pat Matthews, a community health nurse, developed the Dad's Caring for Kids program, which has been run at the Pine Rivers Community Health Centre for the past 14 years. This service was established to help the increasing number of fathers who came into the neighbourhood centre. This course was so successful that it won the exalted Adult Learners Outstanding Program 1998.

Betty was also president of Youth Care Pine Rivers, an organisation that conducts vital work in helping young homeless people in crisis. Betty was a founding member of the steering committee and had been a member of the management committee since 1988. Betty's commitment to Youth Care Pine Rivers was officially recognised in 2000 when she was made a life member.

Betty Blake's funeral was attended by many local residents who wanted to take the opportunity of honouring Betty's great work and remembering a wonderful and caring person. I spoke with Fiona McNamara, a volunteer of the Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre executive. Fiona has said that Betty was a person who was renowned for her tireless work for those less fortunate than herself. Fiona hopes other people follow Betty's lead and show the same dedication to our community. David Horstmann said at the funeral that he was filled with pride to be able to say that he was richer for the experience of knowing and working with Betty.

I believe that it is important to acknowledge Betty Blake's commitment to the welfare of others over such a long period of time and to show appreciation for her involvement in the creation of two important organisations in the Pine Rivers community. It is clear from her great work that Betty will be greatly missed by everyone in the Pine Rivers community.

**Coomera Electorate, School Leaders**

**Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (9.57 pm): I must say that our future certainly appears to be in good hands. That is the only conclusion I can come to when I consider what I have witnessed over the past few weeks. I have had the pleasure of attending a number of leadership assemblies across the Coomera electorate and what a pleasure it has been. As a new member I was quite chuffed that schools such as Eagleby State School and Coomera Primary School invited me to address the parents, teachers and, most importantly, the children to share with them my thoughts on leadership and what it means winning office and the responsibility taking office brings with it. I also shared with them my thoughts on competing for a role and how important it is to throw your hat into the ring, step up to the plate and present yourself for consideration.

We in this House all know what these young people—the winners and those who were unsuccessful—have been through. In their young lives they have now experienced what competing for a leadership position means and they should all feel proud for trying. They are all winners. They should all be encouraged, whether they were successful this time or not, to try again. Just last week I attended a function and was invited to share a meal with the dux of the newest school in my electorate, together with 10 others who were the dux of their respective schools in 2009. Samantha Atkinson was the 2009 year 9 dux of Ormeau Woods State High School, which, as a new school, had years 8 and 9 students only. I congratulate Samantha on her success in 2009 and wish her well in her future endeavours.

I also enjoyed some time at a Girl Guides weekend and discovered the commitment that the girls and their leaders have. It was a very windy weekend and there were some challenges for them. Finally, I must report on the Lions Youth of the Year Quest. What a wonderful experience. The zone judging that I was able to attend had four wonderful speakers, young people from four local schools. Jessica Boyce

from Beenleigh State High School; Rhiannon Davies from Tamborine Mountain State High School; Adam Price from St Stephens College at Upper Coomera; and Caitlin Usher from AB Patterson College were our speakers and they all did a magnificent job.

Their speeches were about issues troubling modern society. Among other things, they talked about drug addiction and mental health issues, which are two issues that I am passionate about. I spoke about those issues in my maiden speech in this place. There is no doubt that those two matters are linked. It is comforting to know that our young people are aware of the issues and are calling for action. For example, in her speech on mental health issues, Caitlin Usher stated—

A crisis is facing Australia, an issue so widely spread that it will affect every one of us in some way.

Caitlin went on to say—

In Brisbane, statistics show that approximately 119 teenagers commit suicide each year ... Suicide is often a result of depression, lack of self esteem, of failure to see a better future. Drugs and alcohol are also an increasingly contributing factor that has only recently been seriously addressed by government.

Her closing remarks were a call to action. She said—

... mental health of Australians is at crisis point, and we as a community are suffering. Education needs to be supported ... by the immediate commitment of appropriate resources.

Caitlin finished with a quote from—

*(Time expired)*

### **Aged Care**

**Mrs SMITH** (Burleigh—ALP) (10.00 pm): This is not the first time I have spoken about the care of our elderly relatives and friends in aged-care facilities. Many older people find that living at home becomes more difficult for a variety of reasons. It may be that an admission to hospital is the catalyst for leaving home. In June 2009 there were 336 older people in public hospitals who no longer had a clinical need to be there. We need to ensure that when they no longer require hospital services they can receive the services and care that they need in the most appropriate setting.

Making the decision to move a loved one into residential aged care can be very distressing and even more so for the person giving up his or her home and, in some cases, they believe, their freedom. The Commonwealth Treasury's Intergenerational Report 2010 tells us that by 2050 the number of people aged 65 to 84 years will more than double. This means that increasing numbers of Australians will be looking for residential aged-care accommodation.

Often it is only when we have personal exposure to a situation that we become aware of the needs and, in this case, the lack of appropriate facilities. When older people access residential aged care and appropriate nursing care, they need to feel safe, secure and well cared for. I have seen incidents of neglect that would make you cry, such as older people with few visitors who may have dementia and clearly have no idea where they are. They are dependent on the staff to care for them—not just meet their day-to-day needs, but care. Everyone wants to feel loved and cared for.

It is clear to me that aged-care facilities are generally understaffed. Unlike child-care facilities, where there is a legislated ratio of staff to children, there is no requirement on owners of these facilities to meet a level of staffing. One nurse and one assistant working overnight is often the norm. This is not fair on the staff or the residents. I have written to the federal government asking that this matter be reviewed for the benefit of all those concerned.

I believe that nursing is a vocation and not just a job. Those who choose the profession do so because they want to ensure that those they nurse receive the best care. However, wages for nurses working in the aged-care sector are significantly below those in other areas. This makes it difficult for facilities to keep good staff. It is time these nurses were paid for their qualifications and experience at the rate of their counterparts in public hospitals.

I applaud the current focus on aged-care facilities and the treatment of residents, and believe only good can come out of this discussion. Those in care deserve much better. My mother has recently taken up residence in a brand-new facility on the Gold Coast. It is beautifully furnished and the staff are very friendly and helpful, but it is more important to me that she is treated with dignity and respect. So far, so good.

### **Russell and Macleay Islands**

**Mr DOWLING** (Redlands—LNP) (10.03 pm): Tonight I rise to extend an invitation to all members of the House to a public meeting to be held on the weekend on Russell and Macleay islands. One meeting will be held in the morning and one in the afternoon. I also extend that invitation to the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, who I know has visited the islands on numerous occasions. A series of meetings have been held on the islands by various groups. I think the minister would find those meetings most productive as the islanders will raise the issues that they have and the challenges that they face with council.

The council has organised a planning instrument. It has conducted a study and is continuing to prepare reports on an integrated transport management system. Of all of the issues, the one that it keeps dancing around—the elephant in the room, as it were—is centred on the parking issue. All of the planning schemes that have been put together and all of the planning instruments that have been used, including the Redland Bay Centre Foreshore Master Plan, have failed to pick up on the parking requirements.

We have a conflict about whether Weinam Creek at Redland Bay is a transport terminal or a foreshore playground. Every time the community comes together, they confront the council and raise issues. I know that they have made a number of submissions to the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, the Minister for Local Government and the Premier. There is no seamless transport interchange at that location, because the TransLink system has not been rolled out to the island ferries. There is not a seamless transport hub or sufficient parking. At the moment, numbers suggest that 1,700 car-parking spaces are required, yet council has made provision for only 1,159. In summary, the most recent report that has been presented to the community states that there are no allocated spaces, there is no guarantee of long-term or permanent parking, there are insufficient numbers of free parking spaces and there is not enough space, full stop. Also, there is no scope for an adjustment to the number of spaces if the council's estimates are wrong. The targets that have been set appear to be about 46 per cent of what is required.

Currently on the islands there are between 5,500 and 8,000 people—no-one can nail down an exact figure—yet the proposed growth on the islands seems to be somewhere in the order of 20,000 to 25,000, depending on whether you take the bottom of the range or the top of the range. Clearly, there is insufficient planning to cope with that. The state government needs to step up and be involved in the process. It must not allow council to carry the can on its own. I understand that it is working in the interests of the community, but in this case it has not picked it up.

*(Time expired)*

### **Gold Coast, Boating and Fisheries Patrol**

**Ms CROFT** (Broadwater—ALP) (10.06 pm): I take this opportunity to mention the good work being done by field officers of the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol on the Gold Coast. There are 11 staff based at the Gold Coast station and they do a fantastic job in educating the public and enforcing fishing regulations. Staff from this region patrol the waterways from the Queensland-New South Wales border to Logan River and west to Moogerah and Maroon dams. Maroon and Moogerah dams are very popular freshwater fishing destinations, particularly given the recent rains. Fishers should be aware of the requirement to hold a stocked impoundment permit if line fishing in those dams.

Between 1 July 2009 and 28 February 2010, 137 fisheries infringement notices have been issued on the Gold Coast. The main offences include exceeding fish possession limits, taking female crabs and failing to mark crab apparatus properly. To give an example, a recreational fisher with more than 20 tailor may receive an infringement notice. Of note was the recent successful prosecution of two recreational fishers who were fined \$12,500 each. The fishers were found with 59 undersize and 13 female mud crabs. In addition, they forfeited their boat because of the seriousness of their actions. The courts recognised that such flagrant disregard for the rules can have devastating consequences for Queensland's marine resources. I suggest to everyone who wants to go fishing that they pick up a copy of the latest fishing rules, to make sure they do not do anything wrong.

Field officers enforce and educate boating safety matters on behalf of Maritime Safety Queensland. For example, officers check our boat licences, registration, safety equipment and adherence to speed limits. Particular attention is also given to jet ski operators in close proximity to other waterway users. Between 1 July 2009 and 28 February 2010, 309 marine infringement notices have been issued on the Gold Coast, with the main offences being deficiencies with safety gear, exceeding speed limits, operating boats without a licence and unregistered vessels.

Nine officers from the Gold Coast station are part of the Marine Animal Response Team. In 2009, those officers participated in the successful release of six whales from shark control equipment on the Gold Coast. I understand that the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol is currently training additional staff for the forthcoming 2010 season.

Easter is characterised by waterways congested with competing users, including recreational fishers, jet skiers, sailboarders and pleasure boaters. This is bound to be a hectic time for the officers. I am confident that they will continue to do an outstanding job in protecting one of Queensland's most valuable assets and ensuring public safety on the water. I ask for people to show common sense and courtesy while enjoying the magnificent waterways of the Gold Coast.

### **Bald Hills, Crime Stoppers**

**Ms DAVIS** (Aspley—LNP) (10.09 pm): Crime prevention is everyone's business and needs to be coordinated and supported at all levels of government with strong community involvement to reduce crime. I am of the opinion that police partnerships with local communities and other departments are the key to tackling crime at its cause and that local residents of our suburbs can tangibly contribute to the reduction of crime in their local areas.

That is why I believe that the northern suburbs community will be very pleased to welcome Crime Stoppers Queensland to the Aspley electorate, where the organisation's state office will operate out of what was the abandoned police beat at Bald Hills. Whilst disappointed that the minister thought it appropriate not to advise the community once negotiations were complete, I am nevertheless delighted that state coordinator Trevor O'Hara and his team will be located on this unused site.

Residents in Bald Hills were extremely disappointed to lose their police beat—a 2004 ALP election promise, delivered just in time for the 2006 election and empty just prior to the 2009 state election. There was a great deal of community angst regarding the future use of the site as it was unmanned, looked dishevelled and therefore, in the opinion of many in the area, sent a message that there were no police at home. Having made many representations on behalf of the Bald Hills community regarding the future use of the building, I welcome the news that this site will no longer be abandoned.

Crime Stoppers Queensland is a conduit for members of the community to provide anonymous information about criminal activity. This information is electronically sent to the police establishment nearest to where the crime is occurring for investigation by the QPS. Importantly, callers need not give their name when reporting a potential crime as in many cases anonymity is very important to overcome any fear of involvement or retaliation.

Over the years, in fact since its establishment in 1989, Crime Stoppers Queensland, by working in partnership with local informants, has achieved some remarkable results, including over 16,500 offenders being arrested, with some 44,000 charges laid; solving 17 murders and 17 attempted murders; seizing over \$557 million worth of drugs; recovering \$8.9 million worth of stolen property; and seizing over \$1.8 million in proceeds of crime.

All of this cannot be achieved without the support of a strong organisation and a dedicated team of volunteers, and it is important to point out that Crime Stoppers Queensland is a non-profit community organisation supported by around 340 volunteers that make up area committees across the state. I encourage any member of our community to contact Crime Stoppers should they have any information about criminal activity, past or present, and I wish the organisation all the very best in their future activities.

### **Savannah Guides**

**Mr WETTENHALL** (Barron River—ALP) (10.12 pm): Savannah Guides is a network of professional tour guides with a collective knowledge of the natural and cultural assets of the tropical savannahs of Northern Australia, from Cairns to Broome. Queensland members include Undara Experience, Cobbold Gorge Tours, Wilderness Challenge, Outback Aussie Tours, Adel's Grove, Bedrock Village Tours, QR Traveltrain and Oz Tours Safaris.

Last week I had the great pleasure to attend and welcome a group of Savannah Guides at Undara Experience on the occasion of one their regular training schools. The founders of Undara Experience—the Collins family—have had a long association with the guides, and 2010 is Undara's 20th year of operation as a tourism icon—an impressive milestone. Training schools are conducted each year and feature experts in related fields including ecology, land management and tourism. I was particularly pleased that a number of officers from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service attended the school and indeed were present to formally recognise the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Department of Environment and Resource Management and Savannah Guides.

The guides were established as a non-profit company in 1988 through the vision of John Courtenay at a time when the concept of ecotourism was in its infancy. Its original purpose was to provide access for tourists to unique natural features on private, leased or public property and in a manner which protected the region's natural and cultural assets. Savannah Guides sites and stations have been developed by privately and publicly owned enterprises and feature nature and/or culture based interpretive activities, while mobile guides conduct tours throughout the region.

All Savannah Guides enterprises must incorporate natural or cultural interpretive activities as a central part of their business and show a commitment to conservation values. Members must meet strict standards of operation and abide by professional codes of conduct, ensuring a high-quality tourism product available across Northern Australia.



Amongst its many international, national and state awards, Savannah Guides was the winner of the Queensland Tourism Awards for industry training in the private sector and the Tropical North Queensland Tourism Awards 2007. Tourism Queensland sponsors the guides under 'Friends of Savannah Guides' arrangements and is also providing funding to help the Savannah Way with production of its regional travel guide, which helps operators connect with visitors.

Tourism Queensland is also working with Savannah Way Ltd and regional tourism organisations to promote drive tourism in this part of the world. I commend the founders of Savannah Guides and all the members past and present who have done so much to preserve and share the treasures of the savannah region of Northern Australia.

### **Burrum Heads**

**Mr FOLEY** (Maryborough—Ind) (10.15 pm): I rise to bring to the attention of members of the House one of the absolute jewels in the crown of the Fraser Coast, and I refer to Burrum Heads. I have been doing a lot of work on the boat ramp situation there, and there are some very pressing needs in the community. Burrum Heads is a fantastic place. They have the Burrum Heads Easter Fishing Classic. That can see 2,000 boats come into the area. Frankly, the current ramps are just unsustainable in terms of being able to cope not only with that traffic but also with the regular traffic, as it is such a pristine fishing spot and a beautiful and popular area.

The Ross Street boat ramp in particular has no parking other than on the street. It does not have a car park. It is a very dangerous ramp in that it backs into a very fast-flowing stream. The constant erosion has ended up scouring out the bottom of the ramp so that basically at low tide once someone drops the wheels of the trailer over the ramp it becomes a very dangerous situation.

A number of my constituents have complained to me that they have seen elderly people swimming with the boats whilst the other person who was perhaps boating goes and gets the vehicle. There is nowhere at all to beach those particular boats and nose them in whilst retrieving the trailer and the car. That is a major issue. The Burrum Street boat ramp equally is very exposed to the sorts of winds that are particularly dangerous when you are trying to launch or retrieve a boat, especially in various tidal conditions.

Today I met with Dr Glen Brown and Randall Hart from the Department of Environment and Resource Management and also with Simon Munro from the office of Minister Jones. We had a very productive chat about the overall situation with ramps in Burrum Heads. Obviously the Fraser Coast Regional Council must take the role of the lead agency in doing that, but I would call on the state government and the council to make sure they do whatever they need to do to expedite some safe ramps being built in our region. We have met. We have looked at all sorts of different sites. Just when it has almost been nailed down on a number of occasions, negotiations have fallen over for one reason or another. We even had Julie Bishop, the federal Liberal member, come up to Burrum Heads and have a look at the ramp when she was in our area on the weekend to celebrate Warren Truss's 20 years in parliament.

*(Time expired)*

### **Carina Meals on Wheels**

**Mr KILBURN** (Chatsworth—ALP) (10.18 pm): I would like to inform the House that early this year the Carina Meals on Wheels was broken into and robbed.

**Ms Palaszczuk:** Shame.

**Mr KILBURN:** It is shameful. Thieves cut the wires to the security system and used crowbars to jemmy open the security door. They stole approximately \$800. This is an extremely low act. How low can you go, stealing from Meals on Wheels? But what I really want to talk about is the wonderful community response to this terrible incident.

Once I found out about this break-in I contacted the local paper, the *South-East Advertiser*, and informed the public that I would be holding a fundraising sausage sizzle at the Stanley Road shops. This event took place last Saturday and, with the support of the local community, we raised \$870 in a period of four hours which will help the Carina Meals on Wheels recover from this terrible robbery.

**Mr Shine:** Well done.

**Mr KILBURN:** It was very good. A number of local businesses offered to support this event. The owners of the Stanley Road shops gave permission to hold the event. The local butcher, Michael James from Carina North Discount Quality Meats, supplied hundreds of sausages free of charge. Carina Fresh supplied seven kilos of onions—already sliced, I am happy to say—and the Crusty Devil bakery provided the bread for the day.

With the assistance of my wife, Nataleen, my electorate officer, Margaret, and a number of volunteers from the Carina Meals on Wheels, we had a great time cooking sausages and onions and raffling a bike that was kindly donated by the local federal member, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, and a smoke alarm and extinguisher package donated by a local businessman Dennis Lothian, who heard about the event and wanted to assist. As well as this fantastic community support on the day, a number of residents also turned up after reading about this event in the local paper and gave cash and donated equipment. One person donated a number of commercial quantity trolleys for the Meals on Wheels and some stainless steel cooking equipment. I think they picked up a total of about \$1,400 in donations which is a terrific result.

I do volunteer with Carina Meals on Wheels, and I know that there are a number of members on both sides of this House who volunteer with their local Meals on Wheels. So I am sure that all members understand the important role that Meals on Wheels plays in our community. It is much more than delivering meals; it also provides a chance to talk and check up on the people who are using the service.

As with all community organisations, Meals on Wheels is always looking for new volunteers to help with the preparation and delivery of meals. I encourage residents in the Chatsworth electorate to volunteer if they have the time. To do that, they can find information on the Queensland Meals on Wheels website at [www.qmow.org](http://www.qmow.org).

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.20 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, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nicholls, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Powell, Pratt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, 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