

THURSDAY, 1 OCTOBER 2009

Youth Parliament met at 9.32 am

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Youth members, you have probably heard about a couple of tragedies which have occurred in our region just over the last 24 hours. There has been a tsunami in Samoa and also an earthquake in Indonesia. The world is very small these days. Our neighbours are very close and there are probably a lot of people that we know that are affected by those tragedies. So I think it is the courteous thing to do and it is also the human thing to do if we rise for a minute's silence in memory of those people who have been affected by those tragedies.

Whereupon honourable youth members stood in silence.

MOTION

Indigenous Representation

YOUTH PREMIER, by leave, without notice: I move—

That the YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament supports the introduction of a range of initiatives to allow Indigenous people to have a better representation in the decision-making processes of the Queensland parliament.

I wish to begin by reminding the House that this is a bipartisan issue and that we are seeking ideas. I encourage all honourable members to take this opportunity to make their voice heard. It is my understanding that there currently is not a state member of Indigenous descent in the parliament. This concerns me as I believe that this could indicate that the voice of Indigenous people is not being heard in our state parliament.

The UN has recognised that some of the poorest people in the world reside in Australia—in our Queensland, in our Australia. This also concerns me. This is not good enough. This is not acceptable. Perhaps we need to make a change to our system. Perhaps we need to do something more. Perhaps we need to do something else. Perhaps one of the members here has an idea, has a solution, has something that we can do differently.

One of the things that has been highlighted to try and solve these problems is this motion and allowing better representation in the decision-making processes of the Queensland parliament by Indigenous people. A couple of models have been highlighted and floated around. One of those models is the idea of a separate table—a separate bureaucracy which would involve Indigenous members. I myself am not such a big fan of this idea. We currently have a table. We currently have a place for ideas. We currently have a place to make our thoughts and our expressions known. That is the Queensland parliament.

Another model that has been discussed is the idea of separate Indigenous electorates. Now, this in itself is a very big idea and it would be in a very involved process and there would be many areas that one could disagree on—as to implementation, as to form, as to substance, as to how many votes, as to how many electorates. There are a lot of questions on this issue and I really encourage honourable members to give their thoughts on possible structure or whether they think the idea is good in the first place.

I also believe that we must be very careful with the possible options that we do look at. I wish to highlight a particular issue, and I do it not in a partisan way at all. I know that currently the Labor Party has a quota system whereby a certain number of females must be preselected to run for seats. I think it has been a good initiative and it has had some good results, but the other fact I have noticed is that in the 1996 election the other side of politics actually elected more female members to parliament. I cite a very partisan issue, but I use it to highlight the fact that I believe we really need to be providing a real solution. I really think we cannot just be putting forward a bandaid solution, to send a message that we are trying to do something. I think we actually need to do something that will have a real effect and make real change.

I am very conflicted on this issue, and I am not sure what position I take. I am of the opinion that we want the best representative for the electorate to result in the best Queensland parliament we can have. I temper this with the fact that we also want a parliament that accurately represents all of the people of Queensland. However, I do not wish to send the wrong message to Indigenous people. I do not want Indigenous people to think that they cannot make it in this parliament, that we need to change the rules to accommodate them, because they can. They have made it before and they can make it to any level of government. I commend the House to take this opportunity to discuss issues and options that we can take.

YOUTH LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION: Please allow me to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land. I commend this motion because I feel that Australia's first people still have little impact in the decision-making processes that affect every aspect of their lives. I almost find it a little rich that the honourable the Premier and I, of all people, have the longest time to speak on this issue. While I wholeheartedly support the motion, that is the problem: two white people, completely removed from the issue, have the longest time to speak while we are fortunate enough to have those in this chamber who have grown up facing these issues every day in their communities. With this in mind, I find it quite patronising to Indigenous people that when tough decisions surrounding their communities are made—such as the stolen wages case in Queensland or the federal intervention in the Northern Territory—only non-Indigenous Australians are heard in Australia's parliaments.

It is still the 'white man knows best' mentality that influences policy-making processes here. The closest we get to inclusive dialogue with Indigenous people over policy is Mick Dodson and Noel Pearson being wheeled out in front of the media. That is supposed to be a blanket opinion of all Indigenous people. I do not think that is right. In our state of Queensland we have one of the highest populations of Indigenous people, representing 3.3 per cent of the population or 128,000 people. Over 90,000 Indigenous people in Queensland are registered voters. Despite that, in Queensland's 150 years of existence only one member of this Assembly and only one senator representing this state have been Indigenous people.

So how do we fix this? One of the suggestions has been for the inclusion of three Indigenous electorates in a similar method as the Maori electorates of New Zealand. I personally think this is a bad idea. Anything that establishes a them-and-us system of government in my opinion is counterproductive. I do not believe any seats in parliament should be determined by a person's ethnicity. They should be decided upon by individual merit. Instead of having Indigenous seats set aside, this parliament ought to focus on methods to help Indigenous people win seats on their own merits. It must be acknowledged that many Maori people opt out of registering with Maori seats. You cannot assume that a whole group of people can be lumped into the same box.

I also believe that it is no good creating a situation where Indigenous Queenslanders can be separated from the rest of Queenslanders. It could lead to regular MPs in their areas further ignoring Indigenous people in their areas because they will not be part of their voting constituency and the rest of us will have our consciences clear because there will be three token voices somewhere at the back over there.

A possible solution, in my opinion, would be for individual political parties to internally sort themselves out and have defined methods of including more Indigenous candidates in safe seats, similar to the way women gained political recognition. Another possibility is some form of proportional representation in a restored upper house to allow a wider range of views. Either way, I do not believe I should speak further. I would rather hear from those it directly affects.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NUDGE: The Indigenous people are the traditional owners of this land. If we are to begin to recognise their ownership of this land we must give them a say in the decision-making process. Currently only one Indigenous person has had a say in the most powerful office in this state, the Queensland parliament. How dare we, as the invaders, remove the traditional owners from the decision-making process. I used a controversial word there: 'invaders'. Many Europeans have difficulty reconciling the fact—and it is a fact—that, from an Indigenous perspective, their territory was invaded. Their land was taken from them by us.

I think if we are to move towards giving Indigenous people a voice in this parliament we must first understand the reasons for doing this. Because the Indigenous people are the traditional owners, because we invaded—took from them—their land and attempted to remove their culture, we must understand that, because of this history, the Indigenous people have a special place in this country. They have a right to this land, and it was wrong for us to take it. Therefore, we must act to re-empower Indigenous people so that they have a voice in the white man's system.

For too long I have heard white people, like me, talk and talk about what Indigenous people want, about what is best for them. Well, I say to white people: shut up. It is time to stop talking and start listening. I strongly support the introduction of Indigenous electorates because it will give Indigenous people a voice so they can speak for themselves. But if there is one thing I would like people to take from this speech, it is this: next time you go to suggest a solution for the Indigenous people, instead of talking for them, stop. Go and meet with Indigenous people and listen to what they have to say.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA: Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land on which we meet today: the Turrbul and Jagera people and their elders, past and present. This year, Queensland is celebrating its 150th birthday—a wonderful milestone for our state. As an Indigenous youth member of the Queensland youth parliament, I looked back on the parliamentary history of our great state and I wondered how many Indigenous parliamentarians have passed through the halls of state parliament over the past 150 years. I did a bit of research and the answer I found was one. Just one Indigenous parliamentarian has sat in our Legislative Assembly in the past 150 years. Uncle Eric Deeral was the first elected Indigenous representative to our state

parliament. He represented the seat of Cook for one term—from 1974 to 1977—and, to date, has been our only Indigenous state parliamentarian. I then wondered why a state with the second highest Indigenous population of any state in Australia has elected only one Indigenous parliamentarian in its 150-year history.

Indigenous representation in state parliament needs to be increased to help reflect the diversity of the state of Queensland and to make more culturally aware decisions when it comes to the portfolio of Indigenous affairs. One way to achieve that is through Indigenous electorates. Indigenous electorates allow Indigenous people to vote for Indigenous candidates who, in turn, will help address the needs of Indigenous constituents, especially within Indigenous communities. That representation will also help to address voter disenfranchisement within Indigenous communities. It will give the Indigenous community a political voice and a representative by which Indigenous people can make their points in parliamentary debates. If Queensland can appoint an Indigenous person to federal parliament and if Queensland can democratically elect a woman as Premier, then Queensland can elect more Indigenous people.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR GREGORY: We have a real disgrace in Australia. The state of our Aboriginal communities, reconciliation and representation of Aboriginal members of our society is a blight on everything that we stand for as Australians. As the Youth Premier noted, we have been internationally recognised for that. I think every Australian should be working and thinking very hard about how we move forward in the future.

The motion before us today is that we should look at implementing more representation for Indigenous people in the decision making in the Queensland parliament. I really do not think that should be an issue. Everyone in this House today should agree to that notion. It is only really how we are going to do it that we disagree.

Parliament used to be a place for only old white men. Thankfully, now we have seen that it is a bit more representative, but it is still not 100 per cent representative. If we can see parliament become a place for the old and the young, for women and men, surely we can see it become a place for white and black to mix together. I see a lot of communities in my electorate and a lot of other communities throughout Queensland that are affected by this issue and have faced a lot of problems. I do not see creating Indigenous electorates or any alternative forum for the Indigenous people as the way forward.

Although I fully support Indigenous reconciliation and I have grown up with a lot of Indigenous people, I do not think we will see real reconciliation until we consider Indigenous Australians as Australians and see the ownership of land as a cultural issue and not as something that we should be implementing in government.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY: If we look around this chamber and take a look at state parliaments throughout the country we would find that there are not many, if any, Indigenous representatives. This is outrageous and it needs to be changed. I had an interesting conversation with the Youth Minister for Indigenous Affairs. She explained to me that her community still feels that they are a lower social class. If we are serious about incorporating Indigenous people into parliament, then that should not and cannot be the case in 21st century Australia. We cannot continue to tell the Indigenous community what is best for them when we have never experienced what they have experienced. We cannot simply expect them to feel a part of this society when we have never felt the pain that they have felt. We cannot create a healthy society if Indigenous people are unrepresented in parliament.

Prior to speaking to the youth minister last night, I did not understand completely the importance of this issue. The pain and the beliefs of Indigenous people are being passed down through the generations. Most members of society are not racist. However, they do not fully understand the problems that Indigenous people experience. If we are serious about change, then both sides need to step out of their comfort zones and walk towards each other. Let us accept them, let us compromise and let us build a healthier society.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY: We have all been privileged to be represented by members of parliament from all ethnicities. These members have served all residents of their constituencies with no less passion for one group than they have for another. In considering the need for the Indigenous nations of Australia to have their culture and communities adequately represented in the parliaments of Australia, I believe that it is wrong to reimpose imperialist style representation on cultures that draw their continuing knowledge from the wisdom of their elders. To include many and diverse Indigenous groups into a single Western model electorate with a single voice cannot provide adequate representation of the wisdom and concerns of all elders.

I believe that each Indigenous nation has its own governance issues and community challenges that cannot be addressed through a piecemeal act of condescending, Western style charity that implies but fails to provide representation.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE: We talk about Queensland being a melting pot of cultures, yet we stand here talking about establishing Indigenous electorates to represent the Indigenous people. But what about the Chinese, the Indians, the African Americans and other races of people? We have just as much to learn from other races of people.

I am not saying that we should not include Indigenous people in parliament, but including only them would be a major misrepresentation of Australia's idea of equal opportunity for everyone regardless of race or gender. It is a segregation of society. I realise that Indigenous people are the traditional custodians of the land, but we have acknowledged them and have provided them with as many resources and opportunities as possible. Would it not be unfair for other races of people? Would they turn bitter? What is needed is more education for Indigenous people in order to empower them to take advantage of the opportunities provided.

YOUTH MINISTER FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS: I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land. I agree with this motion, because I simply cannot speak for someone else. You can know what other nationalities go through and maybe understand it, but you can never experience it personally, mentally and emotionally. For example, why are we holding this YMCA Youth Parliament? Why are we here? Because people want to know our views. They cannot understand, because they are not youth.

It is the same for Indigenous people. You can never understand it—not personally—but you can understand the experiences that we go through. If the parliament is really interested and cares about the views of Indigenous people, we would specifically have Indigenous electorates.

Why have Indigenous electorates? Because we are the traditional owners of this land. Really, we have a right to have a say about every aspect of this land. Every other nationality has a say in their own land, why should we not have a say?

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH: When addressing the injustices against Indigenous people, many Queenslanders focus solely on history. But, as many youth members have stated, great injustices continue to this day. The idea that in the year of Queensland's 150th birthday Indigenous people continue to not be represented in the parliament is horrendous and all Queenslanders should be ashamed of that.

I would like to respectfully disagree with the comments of the Youth Premier. I do not believe I have all the answers, but I propose a quota system that would ensure that five per cent of candidates in state elections are Indigenous people. The main purpose of this quota system would be to increase the percentage of Indigenous participation in the political process. However, it would also be an opportunity to right the wrongs of the past. History shows that groups who have experienced extreme discrimination in the past continue to suffer personal, professional and economic suffering for generations, even if the discrimination has been reversed legally.

This quote would be one way of ensuring a level playing field for all Queenslanders. This type of quota system has been proven to make a difference in the past. The Australian Labor Party introduced a system that focused on women's role in politics and there was an increase of 20 per cent in the number of members in parliament who were women. I think that that increase shows that the quota system would be a great help in helping Indigenous people represent themselves in parliament.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NICKLIN: The initiatives that are proposed in this House today have to be ones that break down the 'us and them' mentality. These initiatives cannot be measures that are implemented for the sake of looking like we are taking action. They actually have to take action and they have to work. Further steps towards reconciliation and social equality must be taken.

I agree with the comments of the Youth Premier in that by establishing a separate table we are further fostering racial segregation. It promotes the idea to the community that parliament recognises Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians as two separate groups and that is unacceptable. We need to break down the misconception that Indigenous people cannot accurately represent non-Indigenous Australians. We need to create opportunities and provide education to demonstrate that Indigenous people are not only valued as an integral part of this community but also are welcome in this House as being able to contribute to shaping the community and that we will support them. These measures need to be enforced to ensure social equality that is unbiased and consistent.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR ALGESTER: For too long our Indigenous Queenslanders have been ignored where it really counts: in this parliament. In a contemporary representative democracy, that is not only a disgrace but also it is really embarrassing. Queenslanders as a collective need to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to become active in the political arena. That is the joint responsibility of all Queenslanders and we need to begin at a grassroots level that completely goes against the bandaid solutions of the past.

Initiatives such as youth parliaments introduce Indigenous youth to the political process at a young age. These kinds of schemes should be endorsed throughout Australia, encouraging all children and youth to participate in democracy and confirming that they are just as capable as any other Queenslanders. In fact, Indigenous youth parliaments should be adopted across Australia and should become part of a federal network. It is proven that these programs show youth how the system can work for them. By getting kids at a young age participating in youth parliaments, we can combat any preconceived notions that the political process excludes minority groups.

Indigenous people have the oldest culture in the world and that should be celebrated within our parliaments. That includes allowing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth the opportunity to speak in their own languages while representing the electorates in their state and territories in youth parliaments. This cements the fact that just because a youth's first language may not be English, just because they may speak with an accent, does not make their opinions any less valuable than any other Australian.

Sometimes we must treat people differently in order to treat them equally. If extra attention is necessary to ensure that Indigenous Australians are on a par with their non-Indigenous counterparts, these changes should be embraced and endorsed.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA: In my opinion, our generation knows and understands Australia to be a multicultural nation. We have friends, classmates, colleagues and family of varied nations, religions and backgrounds. I am not sure whether it is naivety or innocence, but we the youth of today do not see citizens and people of different races as separate. It upsets me to think that there are some who feel marginalised, prejudiced and unimportant in society, although I know that there are legitimate reasons for this. As a young Australian, however, I worry that we are taking on the beliefs, problems and anger of the generations and ancestors before us. It is not within the mindset of youth to discriminate and/or segregate or ridicule others of their generation.

In the eyes of blind innocent youth, we are all equal. It is due to this very belief that the operation of a separate parliament and/or system for Indigenous people upsets me. As a youth and non-Indigenous person who also has no choice over her race, colour or socioeconomic background, I feel unworthy. I do not usually use labels such as 'Indigenous' and/or 'non-Indigenous' because I feel it just degrades a person—a whole into a category or a system. It is crude, harsh, and I feel it has become an excuse—an excuse for a problem created many generations ago but still embedded in our culture and society. I, as the youth member for Caloundra, feel a total segregation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth who have often been largely unexposed to the issue which feeds the excuse that will create a new, fresh wave of misunderstanding, anger and upset between our current generation of youth due to the simple feelings of inadequacy.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD: I want to begin today by recognising the traditional owners of the land on which we gather and their elders. Indigenous Australians have a right to stand in this chamber, but the chamber should be respected and not stacked based on ethnicity. The absence of Indigenous faces in our elected parliament does not escape me, but I believe that Indigenous persons who wish to enter parliament should do so in the same way as other parliamentarians. They should do so by joining a political party, starting their own party or by contesting an election as an Independent. The lack of Indigenous representation in our parliamentary chamber is an issue that we need to address, but creating Indigenous electorates is not the way to do it. Indigenous electorates only further increase the gap and widen the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and affirm the belief that there are two peoples living on one continent.

Elected representatives represent all people, not just one ethnicity. I believe that it is not appropriate for this parliament to interfere in the electoral process. I propose that elected members effect change in the caucus room. I propose that political parties adopt affirmative action and preselect qualified Indigenous people to contest elections. It worked for women, and it will work for Indigenous people. I recognise that leadership, permission and capacity to speak on behalf of the Indigenous people works differently in Indigenous communities and, as such, I believe that we should recognise and encourage Indigenous communities, organisations and lobby groups to band together to form one group, to form a strong voice for Indigenous people, to establish an Indigenous political party, to contest elections in this state parliament, and to stand up and be heard.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR COOK: Kapu mihi bathanga means 'good morning' in my Kulkalgau language. These are the people I represent today, an Aboriginal people. I support the motion simply because there needs to be an increase of Indigenous participants in the Queensland parliament. There was only one Indigenous person in the Queensland parliament, and that is the honourable and respected man Eric Deeral. Our parliament needs to be giving a stronger voice to Indigenous people, because unity with Indigenous voice creates change. When I say 'change', I mean that there is hope and pride and determination. If Indigenous people were fairly represented, there would be three Indigenous members of parliament in every parliament. I propose to create two Indigenous seats—one for Torres Strait Islanders and one for Aboriginals. Maori parliaments have Maori electorates. Why can't it happen here? The voice of both of our Indigenous peoples needs to be represented, and they should be recognised by having two distinct seats. These are the people who call and say that there is no place like home. Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders have vision—vision with initiative and leadership and strong knowledge. With this proposal, I believe that there would be empowerment and hope for the community.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND: I think it is fair to assume that everyone in this chamber would agree that measures need to be taken within the state of Queensland to ensure that the voice of Indigenous Australia is clearly heard and, more importantly, listened to within the political arena. The

question we are discussing today, however, is how do we best go about making this ideal a reality? I do not claim to have the answer to this question. Nevertheless, I wish to share a few thoughts on the matter which I believe are important for us all to remember.

It is imperative that as members of white Australia we do not speak for our Indigenous counterparts and, in doing so, portray our words as being theirs. Essentially, it is fundamental that we do not assume to know their thoughts, for more often than not assumption is incorrect. I agree with the honourable member for Algeester that it is important for us to pursue a grassroots approach centred on culturally sensitive discussion and consultation. We must ensure that we work to include Indigenous Australians in a spirit of humility, treating them as equal partners within government—not making the mistake of thinking that we are doing them any favours or assuming that the best option for them would be to assimilate themselves to our way of thinking. Let us not forget that we have much we can learn from the Indigenous people of Australia and not solely a lot to teach them. I inform my fellow youth members and indeed the members of parliament to be wary of further marginalising and segregating Indigenous Australians with our well-meaning but often uninformed strategies.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK: This week is a time for the youth issues to be heard. This week is a chance for us the youth of Queensland to give our perspectives and hopes for the future of this state. So why is that not the case for the rightful owners of this land? Why are they not given this chance? As the honourable Youth Premier stated, we need to do something different. I have been fortunate enough to grow up with a great influence from the Indigenous culture. Having had this lifestyle growing up, I feel my life has been better off. Creating electorates that have been set aside for Queensland Indigenous people and their concerns in my eyes is necessary. Living in the Townsville region, I have seen the rift between the ideas and thoughts of Queensland's Indigenous people towards the parliament. Having spent a lot of time with Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, I have heard and seen the disgust a lot of Indigenous people have for us, the white people of Queensland, for creating programs that segregate them from programs such as this.

Youth members of the House, I was very upset last year after attending a national youth forum. The question was asked: stand up if you know an Indigenous Australian. Like I said, it was a national program and out of the 500 people 27 people stood up. Some 16 of those students were from my school. Nine were Indigenous from my school. This hurt me deeply. We have to stop talking about what the Indigenous people of this state and this country want; we have to start listening. We are the youth, and I feel that the best way to increase the representation in this marvellous place is to encourage Indigenous Australians to stand up. I feel personally that creating Indigenous electorates is ideal, yet it is not the only thing that is needed.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NOOSA: I agree with the Youth Minister for Indigenous Affairs's comments about electorates specifically for Indigenous people. I would only support a motion to create allocated Aboriginal electorates if there was a firm intention to remove the compulsory sitting of Aboriginal members in the future. My reasoning is this: if we keep treating people differently, how are they ever going to be truly our equals? How can it be equal when some day soon—I am hoping—in the future Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders are sincerely considered our equals by the whole of society? I believe there is already a movement in the right direction. I have never experienced a person aggressively putting down an Aboriginal or Aboriginals in general. This does not mean, however, that this does not happen.

The multicultural society that we live in is slowly changing in breaking down the boundaries between cultures and nationalities. When most people see Aboriginal art in places such as Carnarvon Gorge, it is most often looked upon with awe and wonder. While society does not view Aboriginal life as below human and animal-like, as they used to when the white people first came to this land, there are still views that general society has. It is with this division still that I support the proposal to have Aboriginal electorates on the proviso that Aboriginals are genuinely seen as equals in the eye of the majority and I request that the created electorates be opened up to any person from any party.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BURNETT: I think it is a travesty that in this modern age we have so little representation for the Aboriginals of our community and that we can stand here in this House in the 21st century and ask, 'Well, who does represent them? Are they being represented at all? Do we have a voice for the Aboriginal people?' I think the answer is no, and that is really sad. How can we accurately represent all of Queensland if we completely ignore a group within it? The creation of Aboriginal electorates, while it is not a perfect idea, is an essential step in getting their voice heard. It is an essential step in bringing them forward, not treating them as second-class citizens as we seem to be doing now. We need to be accepting these people. We need to listen to their problems. How can we solve these problems and how can we deal with issues that relate to them if we do not even listen to them?

YOUTH DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION: Before I begin, let me acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today and their elders, past and present. For too long we have not listened to our Indigenous people and for too long we have not considered other countries which do listen to their Indigenous people. New Zealand is a prime example. Yes, they do have Maori

electorates. Yes, they do have a Maori parliament. But they also allow other Indigenous people to come in and it is easier for them to do so in the system that they have. This is why I propose that we should start to have three electorates for the Indigenous people of Australia, but to do that we also need a marginal mixed proportional representation system. This is so that Indigenous people have more of a chance of getting into parliament. In a lot of the electorates where Indigenous people reside, they are bushland areas. Unfortunately for them, a lot of people in those areas do not agree with Indigenous people representing them. This is why we must do something now, and it has to happen today.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR ALBERT: I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of this land. It has been brought to the attention of this parliament that Aboriginal communities are not being represented to the full. I have to agree. However, we need to think of realistic approaches that are sure to work. By appointing seats that only people of Aboriginal background can occupy, what are we saying to the rest of Queensland and the rest of Australia? Should we maybe reserve seats for Muslims, for Chinese, for the Irish? Where will it stop? While I am all for the rights of the Aboriginals, there must be a better way. People are elected into parliament for the people by the people. What I am suggesting to this parliament is that we appoint members of parliament and members of the Aboriginal culture to be the link to Parliament House. Like any other Australian, they have the right to be heard and, more importantly, the right to be listened to.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BULIMBA: Tena koe. I speak in the Maori language today because I respect every Indigenous citizen of the world. These people have developed cultures around the world and will continue to do so into the future. I come from a country where I am the Indigenous citizen. In Britain there are no original people; it was just Anglo-Saxons who started it. I would also like to say on behalf of my ancestors that I apologise for any harm that they caused the Indigenous members of Australia for it was not the intent of the people of Britain to harm the Indigenous people. Unfortunately, naivety, brought on by isolation, was the problem. I also say that it should be the will of the people that leads us forward, not the will of the power that leads us forward.

We should move to a system similar to New Zealand but, in doing so, in re-establishing the upper house, we need to make sure that proportional representation in the upper house is kept and managed effectively. We must also encourage those Indigenous people and those members of ethnic minorities to either form a party or actively pursue roles in their representative parties regardless of political ideology so they might best represent the ethnic minorities and ethnic majorities in Australia. We must also recognise that parliaments around the world have been working in not so much unison but in a random effort to reconcile the differences we have in our electoral systems. I am proud to be an Australian. I am proud that I have been accepted by Australia. But I am ashamed that there are no Indigenous members in this parliament today.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CAPALABA: I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land upon which we meet. Indigenous people need fair representation within parliament so that their needs, like the rest of Queensland, are heard and met. But I have a dilemma. Before stepping into the chamber today I was against the introduction of Indigenous electorates. I believed it would simply not promote unification and equality of the people. I still believe these points but they are only what I think. As we have seen, the Indigenous members of this Youth Parliament here today do agree to creating these electorates. Ultimately, we should take this idea to the Indigenous people and get a better understanding of what they really think and solutions that they believe would better help them.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA: There is a quote that I feel needs to be read out, and I must give fair warning that it contains very venomous views—

The suggestion that we should be feeling some concern for modern day Aborigines for suffering in the past is balanced a bit by the alternative view of whether you can feel sympathy for people who eat their babies.

I say shame, shame. This view was expressed by someone who was elected by the majority of the people to represent all of the people in that electorate. There were Indigenous people in that electorate. I am sure that they all felt fairly represented by a view like that! Pauline Hanson was elected to represent her constituents, of which Indigenous citizens were a part, on the premise that she would solve racial tensions in her electorate, and unfortunately, as many politicians do, she took an extreme side. To take up an extreme position terminates the ability to find a truly balanced alternative. I am not saying that strictly Indigenous electorates are extreme at all. However, it does raise the point of a sort of segregation which would further serve to agitate the Pauline Hansons of the state and, quite frankly, I think one Pauline Hanson was enough.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We still have some time left in this debate. If there are any other youth members who would like to speak on the motion, would you please indicate by standing?

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT: There have been some very interesting opinions raised today. However, I cannot support the introduction of Indigenous electorates in Queensland. It is segregational and it is positive discrimination. We currently have a minister in the government for Aboriginal affairs. If they are not doing their job, they should be replaced by someone who can. We live in a Western democratic society. Our elected representatives are voted in by the majority of the people to represent those people. It should not be based on ethnicity, on creed, on religion or on any factor other than merit.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NANANGO: I would like to begin today by recognising the traditional custodians of this land. The Aboriginal people have been, as we know, discriminated against in not only this state but this country for many years. We have seen within the last 40 to 50 years reconciliation progress, move onward and get better but ever so slowly. The fact is that we need to recognise the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people as members of our society. This was enacted in the 1967 referendum, but I really must ask whether or not the Australian public and social conscience recognise these people as members of our society even today.

I was recently speaking with one of my good friends from school who has Aboriginal heritage. Unfortunately, though, he does not look Aboriginal—he has red hair and white skin—but his grandfather was a full blood Aboriginal. When he tells people that he is an Aboriginal people say, 'You can't be. You're too white.' But the fact is that he still practises the Aboriginal heritage that his family holds. This is so evident of modern day Queensland—the judgement of somebody purely by their looks. This is unacceptable. I support the motion, along with the Youth Minister for Indigenous Affairs, for the introduction of Aboriginal seats and Torres Strait Islander seats to this government to ensure fair representation.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE: I think I can speak for all youth members when I say that greater involvement of Indigenous Australians in the political process would be a positive thing both for the legislature and for voters. One of the means proposed to achieve this end is the establishment of exclusively Indigenous electorates. I personally disagree with this concept. I agree with the Premier that this would be a bandaid solution. The idea of Indigenous electorates is based on a concept of reverse racism. However admirable this may be, reverse racism has one thing in common with racism: it excludes, it segregates and it makes issue specifically of someone's race. The parliament should be one thing and one thing only—colour blind.

When the only Indigenous member of parliament in Queensland was elected by the constituents of the seat of Cook—an electorate where the majority of the voters were actually Indigenous Australians—he only held the seat for one term, from 1974 to 1977. He was elected as a National Party member and lost his seat as a result of the state-wide swing against the coalition in the 1977 election. Doesn't this tell you something about the mentality of Indigenous voters? I think it demonstrates that for them ethnicity is not the issue. What is important to them is the political issues. I think that is what we should be looking at—not race. Race has no place in politics.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR STRETTON: The first Aboriginal member of parliament, Neville Bonner, once said, 'All that has changed today is that white men have replaced bullets and poison flour with a more sophisticated form of discrimination to keep Aboriginals oppressed and fragmented.' People of Australia must appreciate the fact that Australia has a black history. In this sense it is only appropriate to have a range of initiatives to allow Indigenous Australians to have better representation in the decision-making processes of the Queensland parliament. In particular, Indigenous Australian electorates should be introduced in Queensland. During these early years of reconciliation, since the Rudd apology of 2008, it is essential that opportunities based on the notion of substantive equality be implemented to assist this process. Therefore, I support the introduction of Indigenous Australian electorates but for a limited period. In time, as representation becomes more equal, it will no longer be necessary to have two systems in place. The long-term objective is to achieve a more fair and equitable Queensland.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE: The crimes committed by white Australians against the Indigenous people of our nation through history are appalling. As a non-Indigenous Australian, I know that there are specific issues that affect Indigenous youth that do not affect me. Furthermore, as the youth member for Gladstone, I do not believe that I can represent the Indigenous youth of my electorate. If in the Queensland Youth Parliament I feel that I cannot represent their issues, how are members of the Queensland parliament able to be truly representative of the issues and legislation that directly impacts on our daily lives?

There must be change. Personally, I cannot fathom the idea that if Indigenous Australians are given particular electoral seats then other groups should be given them, because to me there is a difference. Furthermore, I believe that in an ideal world there would not be the need for this because in an ideal world there would be equal representation, but we are not in an ideal world. As the Youth Minister for Indigenous Affairs said, we cannot truly understand what Indigenous people have been through unless we have been in the situation ourselves. As the youth member for Noosa said, these electorates should not be permanent and as time passes and our opinions change they should be gradually removed. I totally agree with that because something must change.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR IPSWICH: While I agree with the need to make special circumstances for Indigenous people within our parliament to overcome the issues that face them, it is unfortunate that I must say that I believe this may have the opposite effect in the wider community. It is unfortunately true that there is a significant minority in Queensland which believes that Aboriginal people are already unfairly positively discriminated rather than discriminated against. I believe that this issue must be addressed if special electorates or other systems are to be introduced, otherwise discrimination against Aboriginal people by the wider public may be fuelled further by ignorance. As the youth member for

Nanango said, it is widely not accepted by the general public that you can be an Indigenous person yet not have black skin. Personally I know people who are in this situation and have received at some point abuse and even ridicule simply for the colour of their skin not only by wider society but also by other Indigenous people. This culture of ignorance is something which must be addressed before any governmental system can be implemented to improve the lot of Indigenous Australians.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time for debate on the motion has expired. I call the Youth Premier.

YOUTH PREMIER: I believe that if the House would like change, if they think we should be doing something different, we all should support this motion. That is all I would like to say. Thank you.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Sexuality Education in Queensland Schools

YOUTH DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, by leave, without notice: I move—

That this House recognises the 21st birthday of Family Planning Queensland and further acknowledges the 21 years that the youth of Queensland have had for sexuality education in Queensland schools and the guidance that has been provided to them which helps them make informed decisions about sex and relationships.

I cannot speak for all in this parliament today; I can only speak based on my own experience in this field. When I was at high school I was taught the basics of sexuality education. However, whilst it was positive most of the time, some programs were counterproductive. In my electorate there was a council program. The council program was designed to teach students about sexuality education. It was supposed to be part of Family Planning Queensland, which is a very good organisation. Unfortunately, the program did not address the real issues confronting people. Instead, they taught it from a biased perspective. But I must say for all those here today: this is not the normal thing that happens in our society. The normal thing is that on a lot of occasions it is a positive attribute to our society. This is because of the amazing work that Family Planning Queensland goes into to help the youth of our state get the right education that they so desperately need to help them in their decisions for their own future.

YOUTH DEPUTY PREMIER: I would first of all like to congratulate Family Planning Queensland on their 21 years. I hope there are another great 21 years to come.

I would like to start off by talking about my experience with sex education growing up. I was public schooled for my entire schooling. Unfortunately, however, the sum of my public schooling was the physical, scientific aspect of sex. Since I was about the age of 11, my family has ensured that I have an open dialogue between them and me. There has never been a point in my life that I have not been able to talk to my parents or ask questions about sex. I personally expect every child in Queensland to have that same opportunity.

It is not okay for children to not know that condoms also protect against STDs. It is not okay for girls to not know what a Pap smear is, what mammograms are. And it is not okay for girls not to know how the pill actually works but to just assume that on taking it they must be all right. It is also not okay for parents to be too embarrassed to speak to their children about sex.

We all recognise that education is the key. This will come up time and time again throughout this discussion today. I would suggest that an across-the-board, comprehensive education program needs to be enforced at all schools. It is my personal view that censorship is not okay. It is my view that, regardless of public or private, religious or non-religious schooling, there needs to be a standard. I believe that religious schools do have the right to give their views, but it should be treated just like science deals with evolution—that here is what one hand says and here is what the other hand says. But children need to have all the facts.

I personally believe that it should be a year 6 to year 12 program. In primary schools, however, it should be an optional program, where parents are invited to come to the session or give their permission for children to know about the program. Nonetheless, the program needs to be consistent—not just one lesson a year. It needs to be taught throughout the whole year.

The topics that I believe must be covered, not all at once but incrementally through the six years, are the physical aspect of sex; the health aspect of sex—not just STDs: what they are, what they do, how you get them, how you protect against them; the emotional and social side of sex; family planning; and sexuality.

To parents and to the government: you have the responsibility to say to the children of Australia, 'This is sex. This is what is out there. This is what can happen. This is what most often happens.' To the children of Queensland: when it comes to sex you need to be able to ask. You need to be able to have the facts, not just watered-down myths from your friends and from teachers who are not fully educated themselves. Every child has the right to a myth-free choice. They need to make an educated decision. That, I believe, is integral.

I sincerely hope that every child in Queensland is able to talk to their parents and if their parents do not know that they go and learn about that aspect of sex together. I cannot emphasise enough just how much kids need to know about sexuality and where they stand. It is not okay for them to make a stand without being fully educated.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR IPSWICH: I agree that sexual education is an essential part of schooling today in Australia. However, I believe that our current system is definitely skewed away from the social and emotional impact of sex towards the more physical and biological and disease subjects. I believe that this is not a good scenario as, in my personal experience, many people just simply do not, when they engage in sexual intercourse, understand the emotional and social consequences that will result from it.

In my electorate it is sadly true that many, many, many—a lot of people—will go through their school life engaging in sexual activities. Some of the girls will fall pregnant and some of the boys will become fathers and they simply will not understand how to cope, what to do, what they should say or who they should talk to about the issues now facing them. Many of them have to put their life on hold and they simply do not understand why. This is an issue that I believe needs to be addressed in the classroom—not only prevention of these situations but also how to deal with them if they do occur.

YOUTH PREMIER: I support freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of ideas. As such, I commend this motion to the House. I am entirely against a big government mentality—a big government out there telling a citizen what they should know, what they should do and what they should think. My own experience was such that I attended an all boys private school. Naturally, catching the train to school and interacting with my mates, we had somewhat of an uninformed opinion of how life and things worked. It was truly great—it was truly fantastic—to have someone come in and explain something in a frank, independent and very well constructed manner.

I think we should leave it to the citizen to make their own choices on this issue. However, as a government we must do what we can to ensure that that is an informed decision, and we can do this. I commend you to support this motion.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR WARREGO: I fully support the education that this provides our students. It provides not only current information on safe sexual practices but also a wide range of life skills. However, I have two concerns—two concerns that I feel are failing this critical education. My first concern is that this education is not being taught as frequently as it should. My school has a very highly qualified and knowledgeable school nurse that only gets a chance three to five times a year to talk to the students—nowhere near enough for this form of education. The students must be taught more frequently. Otherwise they will not be getting the information through to their heads and will not be taking this away, home to their parents and to their friends, and putting this into practice in the near future.

My other concern is that the education comes too late for many students. Most sex and life education lessons are only taught to year 10s and above, but rarely does it go to the year 8s and 9s. What I propose is that we start teaching as young as year 7. Those in year 7 or below are very susceptible to information. If we put the information into their heads now, they will take it through to high school. They will have a better understanding of why we are giving them this education and we will see a lot of improvement, not just through sexual practices but also in terms of depression, alcohol and drug abuse.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NICKLIN: I happen to agree that there needs to be more emphasis on comprehensive sexuality education that establishes a balance between biological aspects and the emotional and relationship aspects. Similar to alcohol, drug or religious education, sexuality education is a very complex issue and it is important that the home is included in the education process so that the parents can have the opportunity to foster their own values in the lives of their children. We need to establish a partnership within the education process between parents, who have the qualification of life experience and also have the opportunity so that their values are preserved, schools, who will be able to provide the teacher qualifications, the biological aspects and the physical side that otherwise the parents might not be qualified to give, and the students themselves.

I propose a consistent, standardised curriculum in the form of take-home packages that allow the student to take a set of curriculum home to their parents to talk through. It will provide key conversation topics and it includes the parents so that they feel they are having input into their child's education. It empowers parents to re-engage and feel like they are being involved and not excluded and having to leave all the responsibility up to the school system.

All information must be presented to the youth so they are able to make a choice. Otherwise the education will happen in the schoolyard and no values will be fostered and many students and youth will often misconceive values about this topic, and that is not healthy.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN: This is an issue that is always going to spark debate because it is a real and important factor in all youths' lives. Whether we wish to admit it or not, this is an awkward topic, but we must also acknowledge that this is an unavoidable topic. Not everyone has a family member or someone they can talk to, but everyone is more than entitled to be informed properly

and as confrontationally as necessary. It is not a light issue and should therefore not be treated as such. Despite how arrogantly and obnoxiously informed some teenagers think they are, they are not too cool to be taught these things.

Whilst I myself and no doubt a majority of the youth members here received a somewhat adequate level of education, it was a far cry from being considered enough. I stopped receiving these lessons in primary school, and that just does not cut it. There is the argument that students need to be taught earlier, but what about as we get older? We still need to be informed. The biggest problem with the current system is that we are taught the basic and most well-known topics, but there are vitally important things that are entirely silenced. While I understand we cannot feasibly be taught everything, there is definitely room for us to be taught more—and not just the basics; we need to know the other stuff as well.

I have never witnessed those unsure about their sexuality being told that it is okay and that it is normal. No-one who did not conform to the set curriculum taught was told that it was okay. Issues such as STIs are taught, sure. But are they enforced sufficiently? Are we told about what is often a very harsh reality or are we fed censored and sometimes just insufficient information? We can learn from life experiences undeniably, but why not learn before it happens? We need our youth to know about these issues, no matter how confronting or uncomfortable they may be. They need to know.

YOUTH LEADER OF THE HOUSE: I would like to preface my comments by saying that I am a fan of both social and sexual intercourse, and I hope it is with this irreverence and openness that we as a society can move forward and talk about sexuality education within our schools and within families. I have been privileged enough since prep to have received sexuality education, and it is with this preface that I would like to address the House today.

First, I am sure I join with the rest of the House in congratulating Family Planning Queensland on its 21st year of sexuality education in Queensland. However, it is with these congratulations that I urge Family Planning Queensland to continue their important and necessary work to make my privileged experience the norm rather than the exception in Queensland schools.

I am a firm believer that knowledge is power. I am not suggesting a full-frontal exposé of sexuality at such a young age, rather that sexuality education be a process of learning steps tailored to the development, needs and experiences of individual students as opposed to dormitory talk at late hours of the night or at a sleepover that creates misconceptions and myths that can scare and frighten young and impressionable minds in our society.

It is with these ideas that I address the House today and commend youth members to support this motion in not only congratulating Family Planning Queensland but also suggesting that we look at a younger age and tailor the program, as opposed to saying, 'At this point in time information needs to be addressed,' and introducing the students to sexuality education.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR LYTTON: Today I will be proposing the idea of introducing a compulsory sexuality education curriculum in all Queensland schools because there are so many who go without. I also speak strongly about not only teaching students about the practical information regarding sex education but also addressing the emotional side that comes with this. I propose that school students be taught about the opposite sex. I think they should be taught about different ways to act, speak and feel in relation to the opposite sex, ultimately leading to females and males having the utmost respect for each other.

Surveys show us that teenagers drink alcohol to feel more comfortable to speak to the opposite sex. This is a growing issue amongst teenagers. Clearly, teaching students in schools how to do this—in the classroom, in a more comfortable environment—is not going to lead to them having to resort to alcohol.

Another major issue that would be combated by this curriculum is violence against women—educating boys from an early age and teaching them that women are not pieces of meat and that they are equal and deserve the respect and dignity of all. On the flip side, it is safe to say that there is a huge stereotype regarding men. Women should not be taught during sex education that all men are predators and that any man who will have sex with them does not love them. So this is why I propose this extra lesson in the curriculum.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA: I would firstly like to state that it is extremely important for teenagers to be educated about sex in schools. This is not being done. It has been proven that teenagers learn about sex through other sources such as parents, friends and the media. Although this is fine, I believe this is not safe. The information they receive from other sources may be outdated, as new technology and methods are always being produced.

I therefore suggest that the schools make sure they play a bigger role in educating students about sex as it is an important topic, essential for later life. Schools are not doing this sufficiently, as the information being told is either limited or suspended. This is not fair for the students and their wellbeing.

If they are unable to access reliable and updated information then they are at risk of terrible consequences such as unplanned pregnancy or diseases. So I feel that all schools should have and enforce sex education once a month with a set curriculum, so that all schools can receive and deliver the same information to students.

From my experience, our schools limit sex education. I feel it is important to be able to talk to someone who is qualified and who will not judge you, like parents may. So it is the government's responsibility to provide this education, which is as important as maths and English in today's society.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE: Sex education in Queensland schools is very important in the sense that the information taught can be used by youth to make proper decisions about indulging in sexual activity and its consequences. As we all know, sex education involves much more than sexual definitions. Valuable life skills are taught that contribute to the successful construction of informed views, and informed views mean safe views.

As we all would agree, the importance of this knowledge to use is great. And if the correct methods are not taken to teach this information then the full benefits will not be seen. For example, I know I did not feel comfortable when my year 7 teacher began throwing words at me like 'intercourse', 'genitals' and relationships'. Furthermore, I fail to see how a high school student would feel comfortable talking to their schoolteacher about issues such as an unplanned pregnancy or contracting a sexually transmitted infection. A teacher is not trained to correctly teach sex education and most definitely cannot create the appropriate environment that sex education should be taught in, that environment being comfortable and respectful whilst maintaining educational purpose.

The students are less likely to rebel during sex education classes if the teacher is not already associated with their lives. Respectful grounds can be laid which result in the students taking this subject of great importance with more seriousness and maturity. I suggest that only accredited professionals such as nurses, counsellors, guidance officers or specially trained teachers teach sexuality education to ensure that the students are receiving the correct information from experienced professionals in a proper environment and on a regular basis. The use of these professionals ultimately eliminates the awkwardness and ineffectual learning that often surfaces when regular schoolteachers engage in sex education.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES: It has been said that sex ed is best learned in the classroom and not from gossip in the playground. I take personal offence from this hypocritical, homophobic and openly heteronormative statement, as there is little or no time devoted to homosexuality and transgender education in Queensland schools. Sadly, for so many homosexual people the only way they can learn about their sexuality is from the playground. It is an absolute disgrace that we can live in what is painted as an open and tolerant society but homosexual relations and safe gay and lesbian sexual practices are treated as if they do not exist in sex ed or, if they are indeed covered at all, most often fleetingly and not in an ideal way to bring about tolerance and acceptance. This is freedom hating at its worst.

Suicide amongst homosexual youth is far higher than the average, their marriage rights are denied and I am not going to list the other oppressions. They are undoubtedly second-class citizens in their own country. Sex education in schools, including a section on homosexuality, is the ideal way to change this. It greatly disturbs me that if the views of other oppressed minorities such as Muslims or Indigenous peoples were indeed not heard in schools there would be public outrage. Yet why is homosexuality sidelined to the discussion of sodomy laws in legal studies classes? It is completely ignored by the fat cats in Queensland education.

This 21 years should not necessarily be a celebration but a reflection on the past injustices and future struggle that I and other homosexual people face on a daily basis—day in, day out—still being unsure and feeling ashamed of the feelings I have, feeling isolated, unwelcome and having to always hide a part of myself. Thanks, sex ed.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY: Males are not being treated fairly in the legal system. Let me outline the following scenario. A guy has consensual intercourse with a girl. In hindsight the girl might regret her actions, which leaves the boy in a very, very dangerous position. If she accused him of rape, what do you think would happen? The very moment a girl makes an accusation to the police, the boy is found guilty until proven innocent. This is outrageous. Boys are most vulnerable when it comes to the issue of rape. If girls are unsure about what they want to do then they should say no. Boys would much rather be rejected than to have their side of the story rejected in court. I say with all respect: girls need to be careful about their change of emotions so that only the real rapists get convicted.

Let me get the point across that guys, too, have been the victims of rape. With all respect, being raped is one of the most terrible things that could ever happen to a girl. But when a girl makes a false accusation, not only does it lower the credibility of real rape victims but also it can ruin the guy's life. He loses friends, he possibly loses his job and, worst of all, he might be alienated from his family.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH: For too long sex education has been ignored and unfavoured to discuss as a state issue. The youth are being excluded from the knowledge they have a right to know. Yet the majority of us are not receiving it. I hear stories of how girls get told about the

menstruation cycle too late, that some youths do not hear about how sex is good and how sex can end in other results such as AIDS, syphilis and herpes. When we talk about bodies in school we talk about an actor, a model or someone famous. I believe that this is a bad influence on young girls for their want to be like them. And these are just some of the ideas that come to mind.

I have a few suggestions on how we can bring sex education into our schools. We could start a set class where youth would learn everything from how to stay protected to the types of cancers you could receive from smoking. There should be a teacher designated in primary and secondary schools to talk about any issues concerning them, whether for nutrition advice, puberty advice or sex advice.

Also, there should be posters placed in school toilets, both primary and secondary schools. This information on these posters would be like a do-it-yourself check to see if your sexual organs are healthy or other necessary information like that.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR YEERONGPILLY: 'Party hard, drink up, have as much sex as you like and you'll be right, mate,' is the message we are trying to send in our current sex education classes. We must as a state work towards taking down the force-field that lingers over the heads of our youth. This force-field is an illusion of unrealistic sex. That is why our youth do not know any better.

In public schools across Queensland, youth are not being taught or made aware of the detailed negative effects of sexually based relationships. Sure, youth are being taught parts of the human anatomy, but are they being taught that 'I'm too sexy for my shirt, too sexy it hurts'? Through personal experiences, I have been taught the risks of sex. I have not been taught how and why sexually transmitted diseases or infections are such a big deal, especially if they are contracted through unprotected sex. I have to consult 'Dr Google'. We are letting youth experiment. They are acting upon the notion of 'curiosity killed the cat'.

We need to be teaching our youth about the health risks that they can face if they engage irresponsibly in sexual activities. We need detail. 'Push me and then touch me until I get my satisfaction' is not enough when it comes to sexual education. If we continue to overshadow the reality of sex, surely, for unaware teenagers, sex will surely be on fire.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS: The youth of today will learn Pythagoras's theorem, what happens when you add two chemicals and how Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband, but many will not learn about sexual health and wellbeing. How can we fix this problem before it becomes too late? It is easy: a singular sexual education program that can be enacted in all state schools and any private or independent schools that wish to educate their pupils about sex. Sexual education is not just about sex but social issues, such as personal safety, safe sexual activity, sexuality and puberty, safe partying, sexual assault and sexual wellbeing. Students also need to be educated on development issues, such as stereotypes, healthy relationships, defining stages of relationships, family planning and the gender and sexuality.

Another issue that always arises is who will teach this course. We have all had that dodgy teacher who stands up at the board, stuttering away while the kids are laughing and in the end who just gives up. A simple solution is to have police officers, doctors, psychiatrists and counsellors come into our schools to teach the youth so that we can get our best education possible. Most young people will have sex. So why not educate those who will before it is too late to do anything at all.

YOUTH LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION: I would like to highlight the progress of organisations like Family Planning Queensland with a story about my father. When working for the Queensland Museum, he was sent to pick up an item that had been donated to the museum that had a particular significance to this state. It was a condom vending machine.

Whatever our opinions of our colourful former Premier Sir Joh may be, it is fair to say that his legacy is the reason sexual education in Queensland is only 21 years old. This vending machine was a significant historical artefact, because when Sir Joh clamped down on all sex education, a group of students hijacked the machine, which at the time was a famous incident. Bon Jovi, who was playing in a concert in Brisbane at the time, publicly acknowledged the hijackers. Despite police searches, the machine was never found again. It spent 30 years under the house of the mother of one of the hijackers. Now, it is part of the Queensland Museum's collection as a significant historical artefact. This story shows how much has changed and how much this state's attitudes towards sex have become less backward and prudish. The reduced teen pregnancy statistics speak for themselves.

I found school sex education immensely useful from year 5 onwards. However, being of the information generation, I believe that many other people of my age learn more about sex from what I would like to call online gentlemen's studies. Either way, it is better to be safe than sorry. So I would like to say thankyou to Family Planning Queensland and hope they keep up all the good work.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA: Sex education in schools needs to be uniform and it needs to be taught by teachers who are not afraid to say the word 'sex' and who are not afraid to talk about natural human body parts. Let me give an example of sex education in schools. The school tells two teachers that they have to teach sexuality education to the class. Part of the school's program is to

put condoms on cucumbers and to make sure that students are aware of sexually transmitted diseases. This is definitely something that the youth of the class is going to find hilarious and slightly uncomfortable.

The first teacher was completely open about discussing this subject. She had her class involved in discussions and made them feel comfortable to ask questions. This class felt comfortable and learned a lot. The second teacher was not very open about discussing things. This subject made the teacher feel embarrassed and extremely uncomfortable. She told the class about STIs and wrote them on the board. She then gave the class the condoms and told them to put them on the cucumbers. That was all she did. She did not include the class in any discussions and, because she did not feel comfortable, she censored what she said. That made the class feel even more uncomfortable. This class did not get everything that it possibly could from this lesson and it did not get all the information it should have received.

We all know people who are having sex. On seeing the age of everyone in this room, this is quite scary. For young people to be having sex quite often at this age is scary, especially when they are not being taught the things they need to know. Perhaps a state-wide program needs to be set up to be taught to students and perhaps the teachers who are to teach this class to youth need to attend forums to make sure that they are not sidestepping what the youth of Queensland need to know.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE: Nowadays, children and teenagers are having sexual intercourse at much younger ages and at lower levels of maturity. This is a very worrying trend for the state of the Queensland. In a perfect world, all parents would wish their children to feel free to approach them at any time and ask them anything. Unfortunately, as we all know, this is not a perfect world—far from it.

It is my firm belief that the current sexuality education does not meet the needs of our youth. It is simply too little, too late. This is catalyst for immediate change. I propose that the government implement a broader and far more comprehensive sex education program than the current one and that this course be compulsory in our school curriculum. Parents who disagree with such a course, because they see it as their fundamental right to be the first to chat with their children about such issues, should trust this administrative decision that has been made by the government because inclusive in the program would be sessions based solely on improving child-parent communication and building confidence in children so that they can speak openly with their parents.

This course would be held in a room of 25 people who are all in the same boat. It would not be a confronting one-on-one chat between children and their parents. In turn, the parents' initial worry of being excluded would be the complete converse. This course would result in the greater inclusion of parents in their children's lives and stronger relationships. I regard this course as a great stepping stone towards empowering our youth with the knowledge that is required to live their lives safely. I hope other youth members agree.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR WATERFORD: 'Sex' is a word I hear a lot at school, particularly at high school. It is also a word that is associated with drugs, alcohol, partying and that dreaded word 'pregnancy'. Have youth members ever had a friend who is in an unhealthy relationship? The couple say that they are so in love and ready to do it and you know—you just know—that it is going to end up in pieces, or on the rocks, as they say.

Let us think about this. Would there have been a way to prevent this situation if the couple had a sex education class where they learned more than the effects of smoking and alcohol on an unborn baby and the physical aspect of sex? The answer is that no-one will know unless it actually happens.

I can honestly say that most teenagers in high school learn more from playground chitchat and experience than they do through the little sex education that they receive, with the emphasis on the word 'little'. This is wrong. This is how some unplanned pregnancies happen—by trying to learn and get experience. More importantly, I believe that this is a social responsibility that needs to be discussed openly not only in schools but within families and the community.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MERMAID: An article published this week in the *Age* really took me by surprise. It stated that research has shown that every two in three Australian women are having unprotected sex and that more than half do not know when their next period is due. This extreme lack of sexual understanding is detrimental to the wellbeing of both men and women. A lack of understanding leads to an increased risk of STDs and pregnancies. Hence, clearly the basic sex education that is provided is very inconsistent in Queensland.

Whilst many youth speakers today have discussed problems within the school environment—and I completely agree that they exist—I find it very unfair that we are not addressing these issues with regard to excluded societal groups, such as homeless youth. Just because these groups are marginalised and are unable to access education and resources, that should not by any means create an educational divide. Through living on the Gold Coast—Queensland's highest metropolitan region—and seeing homelessness, I have been able to recognise the issues that are faced by homeless youth. On speaking to a youth worker from homeless services, he told me that it was very difficult for the organisation to provide basic health care and educational resources.

Clearly, we celebrate sexual education awareness within schools, but we fail to realise the clear neglect of socially disadvantaged youths. We need to implement sexual education programs for minority groups. Teachers may stand in a classroom and describe sex education but that will not be practical for those homeless youth who live on the streets, for those home-schooled youth who miss out on state-wide education and for rural students who cannot access qualified teachers or nurses. We need to create sex education support networks for minority groups, open youth forums and have widespread discussion about both the physical and emotional aspects of sex. Also, we need community services to look after youth by providing contraceptives to those youth who cannot afford them. We all hear that song, 'Let's talk about sex,' and that is exactly what needs to be done.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CAPALABA: Throughout my schooling life I moved around a lot. I attended many different schools which, in turn, had different sexual education programs. Some were average and ineffective, but others were simply brilliant. The ones that stood out the most were the programs that used alternative teaching methods and various mediums.

Let me put it into context. Who really wants to ask their old, strict, boring biology teacher questions regarding sexual and social experiences when sometimes we are not even sure that they have had those experiences themselves? I would certainly prefer something a little different. My recommendations for the future of sex education would be to create a standardised program that travels around to schools across Queensland. That program would include people who know how to talk to youth about awkward topics and who are willing to answer questions. The curriculum should also include topics that cover not only anatomy but also social and emotional topics, contraception, health and many others. Rather than reading a textbook, mediums such as videos, pictures, spoken lessons and even games should be implemented so that sexuality is not only seen as a bad thing, as sometimes it is portrayed, but as something normal and something everyone is a part of.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA: First of all, I would like to congratulate Family Planning Queensland on celebrating 21 years of sexuality education in Queensland. I believe it is a fundamental human right to get the right facts about the way our bodies work before we put our bodies to good use. I believe that anyone has the right to seek unbiased information regarding sexual health, their sexuality and the changes and feelings their bodies go through.

Sexuality education in Queensland schools is needed to promote healthy sexual activity within young Queenslanders. Young Queenslanders who are misinformed are prone to undertaking unsafe sex practices, contracting sexually transmitted diseases, having teen pregnancies or, worse, experiencing sexual abuse. Young Queenslanders can be misinformed about sexual health for various reasons—lack of education on sexual health issues, biased sexual health information or personal reasons.

I support sexuality education in our schools as it promotes a more healthy sexual lifestyle for young Queenslanders and promotes an unbiased view of what is natural and healthy to all human lives. However, as we live in the 21st century, I follow on from where my colleague the member for Greenslopes left off, that we must also have more consideration for sexuality awareness. Many young Queenslanders are same-sex attracted yet as young people many same-sex or bisexual young Queenslanders feel it is not okay to be in the position they are in, or that it is not normal what they are feeling. That is why I feel it is necessary to increase sexuality awareness in sexuality education—to make same-sex attracted young Queenslanders feel more comfortable with their sexuality and to show that they can live as accepted members of society. I again congratulate Family Planning Queensland on this important milestone and wish them many more years of promoting healthy sex advice in the future.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY: Queensland students are very fortunate in that sexuality education is now seen as a vital part of students' well-rounded education. While this is generally well implemented, there is a need for a more consistent approach. One very central issue which I have found through my education and talking to others is the timing of sexuality education in a student's overall education. Schools must strike a fine balance between trying to comprehensively educate students before they engage in sexual activity on the one hand and exposing children to these issues unnecessarily at a too-young and fragile age on the other hand. Despite this, comprehensive education on sexuality is being given too late.

From my experience at my school, a short course in sex education done for a term in year 11 was simply too late for a significant proportion of students. Students need to have a broad introduction in upper primary and complete a comprehensive education on sex issues in early high school—in year 8. This simply reflects the reality, as we have heard from reports published this year that by year 10 over a quarter of students have already engaged in sexual intercourse. Leaving the bulk of education about contraception, consent, choice and diseases to years 10, 11 and 12 is simply reckless and it is in direct conflict with the best interests of the students. Discussions need to be full and they need to be frank in year 8. Holding back at the start of secondary education because of some hesitations as to the students' fragility is ill-informed about the reality. It is simply irresponsible and reckless towards the students' long-term health.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR ASPLEY: Sexuality education, as we all know, has been around for many years. It has been educating teens in high schools not only about sex but also about many things to do with it and concerning it. At our school we have a group called Choices, Decisions and Outcomes. This group comes once a year and takes up one day for years 9 and 10. At this age many teens are uneducated about sex and this program explains many things about it and things relating to it. Although this is a good age to start this program, on many occasions it is heard in and around the school that teens younger than year 9 are already losing their virginity. I think that at this age it is outrageous that sexual activity is even present. Therefore, I think sexuality education should start as soon as teens enter high school. This will prepare them for situations in future years and educate them about sexuality, relationships and consequences.

Also, these programs need to be more than occasional. Once a year is just not enough. They need to discuss all aspects of it and not think that teens already know about it and therefore they do not need to know. These programs are helpful for our youth because they teach them about the stage of their lives they will be entering shortly. It has educated me and my peers and personally I think it is a good program. What I like about these programs is how they do not force anything upon students but rather give us a choice to learn. I am in full support of these programs.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BULIMBA: I will be open and frank with the chamber today. Sex is sex. Or that is the way the youth of today see it—as a casual act you can do on a Friday afternoon after school. We here are all a product of sex. I will actually correct myself: we are a product of love. When you have sex with someone, there must be a psychological connection between you and them. If there is none, that is rape. It is consensual and we are all the result of consensual love.

We must understand that the culture today spreads this casual attitude about sex, that emotion has nothing to do with it. I believe that in sex education we should tell students that sex is not just some casual thing you do after work. It needs to be taken seriously, because the impacts of sex could lead on to a child. A 14-year-old having a child is not the aim of their life. When they were born they thought, 'I might make some lego. I might play in the sandpit.' They did not say, 'Let's turn this Baby Born into a real child,' and go around the park. It takes Centrelink and the welfare system we have in place and reinforces them. What we need to do is make sure that the culture is changed so that the youth of tomorrow see sex as a thing that will develop them into the future, not something that is just a momentary lapse in judgement.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND: In my opinion there will always be people to fight for further education on sexually transmitted infections or diseases, contraceptive options, unplanned pregnancies et cetera. For this reason I would like to take a moment today to share with you what I would like young people to hear in sexuality education lessons. I want my friends to hear that they have an intrinsic value and they do not need to be defined by relationships. I want young women and young men both to know that they do not need to look to sex for love. I want my friends to hear more often and in a less clichéd manner that it is more than okay to say no and to make their own decisions. This may seem like idealistic thinking; however, I would personally rather aim high with my expectations than accept mediocre emotional education for my fellow youth.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE: Throughout my schooling years I attended a number of schools. They were all private, both religious and non-religious. Through these years I did not really receive any sex education. In primary school we received the basic information in years 5 and 7 on the changes we would go through at puberty. Through high school, however, I did not receive any formal sex education. My friends and I were told that we would receive it at the end of year 12. In year 3 we were going to be told about the parts of the body and none of our teachers wanted to teach us, so the principal said, 'They really have to learn.' Our principal actually told us incorrectly the parts of the female body. It wasn't very good.

Whilst I did not have formal sex education, I am fully aware of the issues surrounding sex, including STDs, because I do have a good relationship with my parents. At my school—it was an all girls school—we felt supported emotionally by all the teachers, many of whom were very open and willing to both share with and listen to us, even though that was not what they were teaching us about. I fully agree with the honourable Deputy Premier and member for Nicklin that a comprehensive standardised program should be implemented and that parents should definitely be involved in sex education. Like I said, I have an open relationship with my parents and I feel I am better for it.

I must also point out that, as with many other issues, we only hear the horror stories. We never hear the praise. As a result, I would really like to praise my school for the emotional support and education that I received. Sex education is such an important part of our education and it must be supported throughout all Queensland schools.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR GAVEN: We live in a time when divorce is a bigger trend than skinny jeans and the *Twilight* series. My primary concern with sexuality education is that we need to not only educate our youth on a healthy sex life but also educate our youth on how to maintain a healthy relationship in general. Respect, etiquette, temptation, language, sex and deceit are some of the key factors contributing to the destruction of youth relationships and the cause of that horrible feeling of

heartache. With teenage hormones flying around like a ball on the squash court, high levels of depression, violence, abuse of alcohol and drugs, stress, emotional trauma and self-harm are evident in the social stream. We should support the ideology that cheating on your partner must be stopped and the ideology that owning someone and controlling someone is not right.

When someone is degraded in such a way, especially by someone they are meant to trust, it affects their future relationships. In order to break this trend of relationship destruction and high divorce rate, we need to educate and celebrate healthy relationships for all. Whether we are heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, trisexual or asexual, we all deserve a healthy relationship, no matter who we are. Speaking from personal experience, this lack of a healthy relationship within sexuality education has affected me and my friends. It is imperative that we get this out there in the open so that people know when to say no, when to appreciate people and when love is love. Intense feelings and hormones are different.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT: Let us talk about sex. I went to a public school in a rural area. We received a comprehensive sex education. However, in the year above mine, which graduated two years ago, from a class of about 90 students I can count at least five girls who fell pregnant the year after graduating. This is not acceptable. It shows that not only do we have to teach our young people about the realities of sex, the biology of it; we also have to teach them that they are accountable for their actions. It is up to them—the decisions they make and the consequences that follow.

Building on comments by the youth member for Lytton about teaching men how to treat women, I would also like to see a greater focus on teaching young women not to get themselves in dangerous positions. Too many times have I seen people close to me end up as victims of situations where they have made themselves vulnerable and did not know how to deal with it. It is imperative that we address this issue in society. It is far too prevalent.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR TOWOOMBA NORTH: Sexuality education is not just about sex; it is about learning about situations that students may come across in their life. Today I will be talking about my experience with sexuality education, and it is a positive one. I come from an all girls school in Toowoomba and my school provides a fantastic core subject Life Skills which is compulsory from year 7 to year 12. This core subject provides useful information regarding situations and scenarios that students will come across in life. These core skills and topics include alcohol and drugs, mental health, friendships, the female body and puberty, and of course sex and safe sex. I believe that these topics provide safety and common sense to students. They teach students to think wisely and, most importantly, to specify that it is the student's choice. If I ask any of my school friends their opinions on the subject Life Skills, they would say that it is necessary to know what is out there and whether it is positive or negative.

The reason why my school's approach to sexuality education is so successful is that our school counsellor is our Life Skills teacher. Our teachers know and have studied the psychology of young girls and know the main aspects of sexual activity. It is important that the teachers know what they are talking about. If students feel comfortable with the teachers, then the students will be able to ask them what they want to know. This information needs to be told to the students because students want to know about themselves and their bodies.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NUDGE: My sex education began at the age of four when my parents bought me the book *Where Did I Come From?* The next experience I had was from year 5 when Family Planning Queensland experts came in to teach us about sex education in years 5, 6 and 7, and those workshops were done excellently. But when I got to high school sex education completely dropped away. It was not even mentioned, which is ironic because that is the time I believe when young people need it most.

One of the reasons that sex education in high school is problematic is that, as many members have stated, teachers are not giving them the sex education they need or giving it in the way that they need it to be given. That is because a lot of high school teachers are not trained to give sex education and find themselves teaching it when they are not comfortable or appropriately prepared to do so. I think it is time for sex education to become a part of a high school teacher's training, just as a teacher can choose to be a specialist teacher in drama or social science, and hopefully Family Planning Queensland could be a part of that training. This would significantly improve the teaching of sex education in high schools.

The other thing that I think should be emphasised in sex education is that sex is okay. It is not something to be scared of or something that is wrong; it is something that is natural and happens and is a part of many people's lives, and that is a healthy thing. The benefits of sex education should be to learn about safe sex—emotional and physical—tolerance of people who have different sexual preferences and awareness of the options available to you if you do fall unexpectedly pregnant.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE: Firstly, congratulations to Family Planning Queensland on 21 years of sexuality education. You have essentially done a great job. There is no doubt in my mind that sexuality education is vital across all schools. In short, it saves lives. However, something has to be done about the way it is presented to our leaders of tomorrow. In my experience—and I am sure the

experience of some of the members around me—my sexuality education was fragmented, at best. I remember the giggles as they tried to cram the entire female population of my school into our tiny school hall and taught us how to put condoms on bananas. In my opinion, this is not good enough. A program needs to be put in place that is a combined effort between the health and education departments to provide an extensive sexuality education program for all of those in state schools.

To me, it is about empowerment—empowering the teachers first of all. To be honest, I am not sure I would be comfortable getting up in front of a bunch of hormonal teenagers and talking about how to stay safe, but providing an extensive program for them to follow would no doubt make it easier to present. Sexuality education is more than the biological side. While this is important, all youth need to know how to protect themselves from STIs, pregnancy et cetera. To me the most important part is reminding the youth that they are special—regardless of sexuality, appearance and religious beliefs, they are important to our society, that they are no-one's puppets and that no-one—I repeat no-one—has the right to make them feel any less than amazing. I believe that an extensive human relationships education program is the first step towards this.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR GREGORY: I was not originally going to speak on today's topic, so I do not have anything to say about how I think a program should be implemented. We have the experts who are sitting in the gallery today who have had 21 years at it, so I am not going to tell them how to do their job. I am just here today to talk about my experiences. I cannot say that I have had such a privileged experience as the Youth Premier. My experience was more like the youth member for Gladstone. I attended a public primary school as I did distance education and then went on to a private high school. I must say that I probably learnt more in primary school than any of the programs that were ever featured in the public school that I went to.

I think there is something that we can do here in the House today, and that is to ensure that the sort of education that Family Planning Queensland do such an excellent job at is implemented across all schools in Queensland so that everyone who gets an education in this state is educated in sexuality education and that we do not see a disparity between those who attend one school over another simply because of the beliefs of that school.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE: Mum, dad: where do babies come from? Most of us as children would have asked our parents this very question.

A youth member interjected.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE: Exactly. I myself remember being told that I started off as a wee Cabbage Patch kid. You can imagine how shocked I was when I found out that I in fact came from my mother's uterus. And that was from my school friends, mind you. Sex to me until then was foreign. Formal sexual education in my school was not introduced to the students until grade 9, and even then it was a half-hour lesson every fortnight for a term during physical education class. The education we received on this topic was filled with holes and left us wondering. We were never taught about the different types of contraception. We were never taught about the emotional side of sexuality education. We were never encouraged to approach our teachers or parents if we had questions. We were taught to abstain at all costs or else suffer the consequences.

Why are we not taught the true nature of the birds and the bees? Sex is a fact of life. Animals do it. We do it. So why are our teachers and parents almost embarrassed to discuss it? Young adults need to be provided with as much unbiased information as possible in order to allow them to make an informed decision. I agree with the youth member for Capalaba on introducing an independent, standardised sex education program throughout the entirety of Queensland to teach students the ins and outs of sexual activity.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BURNETT: This year sexual health education in Queensland turns 21, and my how it has grown! It was a planned pregnancy, but that does not mean it was not rocky. Many different groups did not want this program to see the light of day. From its infant days to its first shaky steps, it was controversial. It went through puberty, got mood swings and tended towards different individual schools' viewpoints. Now, though, the program is 21 and it is having an identity crisis! On the one hand, in some schools it is taught from a purely biological standpoint and in others purely from a religious standpoint. Only in a small number of schools are youth given all of the facts and all of the different effects of both the physical and emotional sides of sexual activity.

Let me talk about my own experience with sex education. My school crammed all of the students in our grade into the one room and put a very confused teacher up the front where they explained that 'sex is purely for making babies and purely for after marriage'. Then we got a delightful video in which a religious practitioner explained, 'Pregnancy won't kill you, girls! But if you do have sex and get pregnant, the worst thing you could do would be choose not to have that baby, and if a boy doesn't want to wait for marriage he just doesn't love you.' I cannot tell you what came next, because at this point I swore at said practitioner and walked out. This program is essential in the modern world. It is essential for Queensland's youth. However, it is not being taught effectively by all.

(Time expired)

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): The time for debate has now expired. I call the Youth Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

YOUTH DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION: I agree with a lot of points that were made in today's debate. It was very interesting to hear other members' points of view and I am sure everyone—and I repeat everyone, whether they are in the public gallery or whether they are a member of this parliament now—would agree with what I have said. I also believe that Family Planning Queensland have done an absolutely fantastic job. The fact of the matter is that through Family Planning Queensland's work they have been able to get family planning into the school curriculum. Unfortunately though, as some members have stated, it is not taught in all schools or if it is taught it is not the right manner in which to teach it. But in the spirit of this debate and in the spirit of this occasion today, let us all join together and congratulate Family Planning Queensland on 21 years of sexuality education.

Honourable youth members: Hear, hear!

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House will resume after a short break. Before we all leave, I seek your indulgence just to give you a short concluding remark before I head off and my parliamentary colleague the state member for Kallangur steps into the Deputy Speaker's chair. I want to commend everyone on their outstanding contributions today. This is a wonderful opportunity not only for you to experience the operations of parliament and government but for members of parliament and the government generally to hear your views about issues important to you. We have debated two great motions today about Indigenous representation and sex education in Queensland. Those views that we have heard today are very important. There was a diversity of views and I am sure that that represents the diversity of views in the community. Thank you for the effort and the time that you have put into your contributions to the motions and the debates today. I enjoyed my time. I am not sure whether or not the youth member for Beaudesert will see me afterwards—I hope not—but I was nonetheless honoured by your great compliment. Enjoy the rest of your Youth Parliament experience and we will hopefully see you around the place.

Sitting suspended from 11.44 am to 12.08 pm

MOTION

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

YOUTH DEPUTY PREMIER, by leave, without notice: I move—

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow immediate presentation to the House of a youth bill for a youth act to cultivate a habit of philanthropy and civil service and the passing of such youth bill through all its stages in one day.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

COMPULSORY CIVIL SERVICE YOUTH BILL

First Reading

YOUTH DEPUTY PREMIER: I present the bill and explanatory notes and move—

That the youth bill be now read a first time.

Second Reading

YOUTH DEPUTY PREMIER: I move—

That the youth bill be now read a second time.

I would like to start by encouraging the opposition to get all of their communist and Hitler ideologies and all of that pettiness out of their system now, because the real issues need to be addressed, and that is exactly what I will be doing. So here are some simple truths of the program. The first is social responsibility. This bill incites and instils a vigorous passion of philanthropy and a habit and an ideology of duty to our fellow man. It is such a crucial belief yet, while most of us feel or assume that we have it, most do not act upon it. This bill aims to correct that.

We all have as citizens of Australia a social contract. That means that being part of this country I have no right to punch the Youth Premier in the head—which I would never dream of doing. However, this bill wishes to extend that social contract to proactiveness and to duty to our fellow man. So we suggest that in the year that you turn 16 you are required, over a five-year course, to fulfil 100 hours per

year of compulsory community civil service. There will be a registration program whereby you register your services with an organisation and, if you cannot for whatever reason fulfil the requirements, you can apply for a reduction in or an exemption from the program.

Let us compare this program to those who already volunteer, as I know that is going to be an issue. Those who are already volunteering should have no issue with the rest of the state volunteering, because it is the act of being compassionate that really matters. For those who compare this program to those who have been sent to jail or are required to do community service as punishment, let me say this: this program allows youth to use their own skills and it gives them flexibility to allow them to target aspects of life that they enjoy and then apply it to society. The community service that criminals undertake typically targets negative, undesirable acts as punishment. Clearly there are two different things going on there.

This program is about skills and flexibility. It gives youth experience and society directly benefits from their skills. It is entirely economically and socially viable. It is estimated that this program has the potential to provide \$1.7 billion of service to the community.

It is a grassroots approach. You are directly targeting community service at the grassroots level. You are interacting with the immediate wounds of society. If you have that personal connection with it, you feel that compassion and you feel that drive to do something about it. That is what this bill targets and drives home.

Immigrants at that same age of 16 are also encouraged to participate. It gives immigrants a sense of entitlement and a sense of connection with the community—that they have earned their citizenship and that they have a level of equality with their new fellow citizens.

I say to those centred on entirely undermining the integrity of this bill that the penalties reaffirm the norm of social responsibility. Penalties allow Queenslanders to take ownership of society, to have a sense of entitlement and to have appreciation for what it means to be a citizen of this great state. For those antsy teenagers shouting, 'We want our rights,' in a world of complete affluence that is their life, let me reassure them that banks will not be closing; Jews, homosexuals and gypsies are safe; and Queensland will not be invading Poland.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR ALGESTER: What is it called when a person is forced to work without pay? That is right—slavery. If only the British Empire had the Youth Deputy Premier to explain to African slaves the benefits of the skills they were learning! I am appalled that the Youth Parliament is even considering a bill that is such a blatant deprivation of civil liberties.

I would like to remind the House that Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Specifically, article 4 states that no-one shall be held in slavery or servitude and that slavery is to be prohibited in all its forms. Moreover, article 21 outlines the fact that all people are to have equal access to public service and shall be allowed to vote. This bill is a rapid destruction of the fundamental elements of a democracy and illegitimises the state of Queensland.

As human rights have no constitutional protection in this country, it is the duty of the parliament to ensure that the basic rights of its citizens are protected. The government's initiative serves to enslave our state's youth in a militaristic scheme and severely deprives those who fail to meet the requirements of their fundamental rights.

Let us first consider the practicalities of enforcing this scheme. Are we to have some kind of civil service Gestapo or some kind of identification method for those who fail to complete their civil service hours? Why not make them wear a yellow star? Do we really want to join the league—

A government youth member: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on the relevance of this argument to the debate.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the youth member for Algester explain the relevance?

YOUTH MEMBER FOR ALGESTER: The relevance is that if Queensland introduces a compulsory civil service scheme we are joining the league of other countries who have also done this and those countries are those that have introduced the most atrocious regimes within the 21st century.

This is an extremely significant issue. These penalties remove the fundamental rights of our citizens. The government proposes to create an underclass of those who fail to complete their hours. In one fatal swoop, a youth who cannot pay for an appeal loses both their right to vote and their right to an identity. It is obvious that the most disadvantaged members of our communities will be those who are least likely to complete their hours. The government suggests that these youths are to be disenfranchised and to be completely removed from the political process.

Any state-wide compulsory program must be equally accessible across Queensland. This program is completely city-centric. It fails to acknowledge the diversity across this state and acts to disadvantage youths living in isolated communities. Any teenager who goes to Brisbane Grammar School could easily volunteer to work at Aunt May's association for budgies with diabetes, but their counterpart in Aurukun cannot do that. In fact, the basic nature of this bill is discriminatory. When will the

government accept the fact that this state is not a homogeneous group of middle to upperclass city residents? This bill identifies the government's lack of compassion for the most disadvantaged members of our communities.

The bill states that this program has an appeal process for youth including those with financial disadvantages. I would like to remind the government that appeals cost money. How is a person who cannot afford to spend an average of two hours a week doing compulsory civil service going to be able to afford to appeal? Any bill that attempts to force citizens to participate in any form of service against their will is a manifest abuse of parliamentary power. It is completely unacceptable and paves the way for loose legislation contravening the basic rights of Queenslanders. If we are to move on from the fact that the Youth Deputy Premier has taken her inspiration from Hitler Youth, I can also outline that this compulsory program—

A government youth member: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. That was a personal insult to the Youth Deputy Premier, making links between Nazi Hitler—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Youth member for Algester, I ask you to withdraw.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR ALGESTER: I withdraw my statement. The Deputy Premier is not a supporter of Hitler. I can also outline that this compulsory program degrades the value of volunteers in our community. The degree and quality of service will be destroyed by youth doing a half-hearted job because they just do not want to be there. The Youth Deputy Premier cannot guarantee that youth forced to complete civil service hours would do so in an unsatisfactory manner. The government may not care about the rights and needs of the people of Queensland, but the opposition most certainly does.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR ALBERT: When people think of an age when youth are able to understand and fully appreciate the work of volunteers, most would say mid to late teens. We, the government, feel that starting the program at this age would make it more likely that participants take something out of the program. It also establishes a habit and an ideological shift towards civil service at an age when habits can still be formed.

By having this bill in place, more youth are going to directly help their community at a grassroots level by supporting the people who require help, and they will also directly experience disadvantaged groups, thus planting seeds of inspiration for change. A variety of skills such as tolerance, patience and compassion will be learnt from the program. We all look for qualities in a leader and these are some of them.

By participating in the civil service, it is more likely that youth will respect each other and take more of a stand on issues that are important to them if they see it. By accepting this bill, we will be strengthening community ties and, when it comes down to it, isn't that what we really want?

YOUTH MEMBER FOR GYMPIE: National civil service—sound familiar? Maybe because it was outlawed over half a century ago due to public outcry. Personally, I would actually like to thank the government for submitting this bill to the House because returning something as ill-conceived and as ill-considered as compulsory civil service to active duty is a sure-fire way to get our current government booted out at the next election.

I would like to draw to your attention, Madam Deputy Speaker, part 5 of the bill—penalties. Please inform me, fellow members of the House, in what day and age, in what country even, penalties encouraged any teenager to participate in an activity they did not wish to participate in? It is incomprehensible that the government believes that this bill is fitting in its entirety when in actual fact it is an extreme piece of ridiculous propaganda.

Where volunteer work was once a fulfilling part of community spirit, the government is proposing to turn it into a mandatory form of punishment for students yet to commit a crime. In addition to this, the government is suggesting forcing students to participate in civil service which will only serve to push them away from volunteer work in the future. This short-sightedness from the government's perspective only serves to reiterate the failure of the bill put before us today. However, two simple amendments to the aforementioned sections would serve to create an excellent attitude of philanthropy and community spirit among today's students. I urge all members of the House to vote for the opposition's amendments.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CAPALABA: The number of hours that each citizen spends performing compulsory civil service is the very foundation of this program. The time allocated sets the framework that the young citizens work within. The more hours spent the better. This program is an opportunity for the youth of this state to gain experience in areas which they would not normally venture into. It gives us an opportunity to pave the way for decreasing discrimination, violence and other crime. This bill will instil a habit of service and a greater duty to social responsibilities.

Civil service workers, as the system stands now, gain great benefits from what they do. All we want is for the entirety of youth in this state to gain the same benefits, experiences and knowledge that the current civil service workers have gained. Of course the amount of time they spend has a direct effect on this. We propose a total of 500 hours over five years. This essentially works out to be two

hours a week which, I might add, is very doable. This allows the youth participants to continue with their work and school but still give back to their community. The activities undertaken can easily be included in everyday life. The program is flexible and allows the youth to undertake service of their choice, meaning that the youth would use skills they already hold to participate in their community.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA: It appears the collective intellect of those opposite has taken a compulsory leave of absence. Nevertheless, their comedic prowess is unquestionable, as proven by this bill.

The government suggests that this bill is intended to cultivate a healthy spirit of philanthropy and civil service. This must be an attempt at sarcasm. It must be! How does making civil service compulsory cultivate anything beyond contempt or healthy disdain for the government? If people are compelled through tactics of intimidation, what else are they meant to feel but a sense of resignation at having to perform their service not because of their passion for the community but because the government will effectively divorce them if they do not?

The opposition is giving those opposite a lesson on social responsibility. You teach people to care about civil service; you do not force them. The government says this will bring about equality. I ask them: what about freedom—freedom of expression through voting, freedom of movement, freedom of choice—all of which would be lost by choosing otherwise? Silence usually is a sign of consent but in my case it is usually a sign of I have no idea what I am talking about at this point. In fact at this point I feel that I must conclude by championing the opposition's belief—the old adage that the Americans usually cry in a case like this—give me liberty or give me death!

YOUTH MEMBER FOR WATERFORD: Voting, your driver's licence, access to public transport—these are basic democratic rights, are they not? But does everybody deserve these rights without giving something back? The Compulsory Civil Service Youth Bill 2009 will ultimately change Queensland for the better. For too long Queenslanders, Australians, have taken this state, this nation, this country for granted instead of appreciating it.

Penalties are defined as a course of action taken when a program is not complied with. This is almost as controversial as the previous MPI on religion. The penalties that apply should not always apply to all individuals because we recognise that we are all different and that one size does not fit all.

We detest the fact that as a state, as a whole, our generation does not feel the need to contribute to society in any way other than sitting around watching TV, playing video games, doing nothing. We are merely wanting to instil social responsibility and the rights and responsibilities of being a Queenslanders to those who fit and do not fit not only my expectations and the government's expectations but also the state's expectations of a Queenslanders, let alone an Australian.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR STRETTON: Madam Deputy Speaker, I would first like to draw your attention to the explanatory notes, especially the purpose and objectives of this bill. According to paragraph 1, line 8, the phrase 'call of duty' is used. The last time I heard this phrase was during one of Tom Cruise's earlier 'I love America' films, sporting a crew cut. America's military industrial complex is bad enough. The last thing we need is a Queensland military industrial complex. I mean, sure, New Zealand might need one but not Australia, not Queensland.

In the same paragraph, line 17 to 18, it says 'enforced volunteering'. Let me say that again: 'enforced volunteering'. What a contradiction in terms! That is almost as bad as the oxymoron 'Army intelligence'. Clearly, this bill, 'a youth act to cultivate a habit of philanthropy and civil service', is really a form of conscription. Militarism is not the way to go. Compulsory service—do not let it fool you. Let's not give warmongers an opportunity to reintroduce conscription on the pretence of cultivating a habit of philanthropy and civil service.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE: I ask youth members to imagine being in my position. I have come from a Third World country to this great nation of ours. It is really hard for those immigrants who have come to Australia to integrate into the community, and this is especially so for Africans. I suggest that this bill is actually good for them, because it is going to help them integrate into society.

I ask youth members to imagine being in my position. I have just moved to Australia and moved to a neighbourhood where everyone is white. We are the only Africans who live in the street. You do not know anyone. You do not know your neighbours. You have just moved in there. You do not even know what to say. You do not know English. You are trying to do something for the community but you cannot do it.

I think this youth bill is a good idea for us, because it is going to help us to do things for our neighbours, to share ideas and to do things that are of benefit for the community. I propose that the opposition members be made to think more about what is good for our community, because what they are saying is not making sense at all. For someone who did not grow up in Australia, it is really hard, especially for migrants, to do things in the way that you want to. As we know, we are all humans but we are different. We do things in different ways. If we support this youth bill it will help most people, especially those migrants who arrive in Australia, to do things as a community.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH: I cannot believe the arrogance of the government. This youth bill is unconstitutional, undemocratic and truly un-Australian. I would like to begin by informing the government that Chairman Mao would like his script back, please.

I actually think it is quite laughable that the government has so much passion for statements but obviously has no passion to protect the rights of its citizens. This youth bill is telling young Queenslanders that if they do not support the government their basic democratic rights will be taken away.

The foundation of justice in society comes from ensuring that the punishment fits the crime. Failing to complete 100 hours of forced community service should not result in fundamental human rights being taken away. Even the most serious criminal offenders—rapists and murderers, for example—can vote and drive a car after serving their sentences. In comparison, this youth bill ensures that if a 15-year-old decides, in an act of rebellion, not to complete a couple of hours of community service they will ultimately live a life of disadvantage and second-class citizenship.

Furthermore, the government has become so infatuated with taking away the rights of its citizens that it has not addressed the real, practical issues involved in implementing this bill. Finally, I ask how this government will be extending its cultural revolution in the next five-year plan.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH: Some of the views voiced today by the members of the opposition have made me sick. First of all, we had the youth member for Algester equating this bill with slavery. I do not know what the youth member thinks slavery is, but when I think of a slave I think of a person who is kept in a shack and is given only food and the basic necessities by which to live. This is not what this youth bill is about.

People in Australia do not know how lucky they are. I ask youth members to think of other countries—Third World nations—where there are civil wars and genocide. All we are asking is for people to contribute a small amount of their time to make this a better place. All we are asking is that youths get their hands dirty for two hours a week. That is not too much to ask—although that concept might be foreign to the opposition. This government is committed to doing everything it can to make this better place for youths and the whole community.

I also want to address the opposition's false assertion that appealing to the committee costs money. All it is is a form sent to the commission that costs nothing—

A youth member: Where does it say that in the bill?

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH: It is in there somewhere. Just read the bill.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE: I will be short and sweet. This youth bill is a fundamental infringement of our human rights as citizens of a Western democracy. Through this government enforcing a social contract on its constituents, it is seeking to assert its neo-Marxist agenda. Such tyrant notions expressed in this youth bill could only be expected from such a government. What a great birthday present the 16-year-olds of Queensland will be getting from this government: five years of oppression. We may as well send them to the gulag. This bill is ultimately Hitler's love child and represents the coming of the fourth Reich in Queensland.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY: This youth bill is about getting our young people to give back to our community. To give back to our mates is something that is Australian. To be frank, like the youth member for Algester, I am appalled at the un-Australian attitude of the opposition. This youth bill is about making a significant change. Just because these changes are significant does not mean that the members opposite should be running scared—like the opposition usually does—at the sight of a challenge. Rather, we should be praising the significant benefits of this youth bill.

This youth bill is going to give benefits to society as a whole. The hours of work that will go into a wide variety of worthwhile community services is phenomenal to the community and to the community services sector. Those hours will grow substantially and we will be the envy of other Australian states.

Further, this youth bill is for the good development of Queensland's young people. They will develop a sense of social responsibility—something that is so important in a modern, functioning society. It will give them a strong passion for philanthropy. I know that I want to live in a society of giving, caring, philanthropic people. Obviously the opposition wants to continue living in a society that mirrors themselves: selfish, isolated individuals who are cut off from social responsibility. Let us pass this youth bill and let us improve Queensland.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR LOCKYER: This five-year plan of cultural revolution is an abhorrent destruction of the values of this glorious state. As the opposition members have said, this youth bill is against human rights. It is fascist, unconstitutional, deters real volunteers and is completely and utterly unjust. In fact, this bill is completely unparliamentary.

What is not to hate about this bill? Even the short title is abhorrent. But in all seriousness, volunteering is good for our community.

An honourable youth member: Voluntary volunteering.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR LOCKYER: Yes, voluntary volunteering. In fact, I have organised a number of events for youth in my electorate and I, like the youth of this state, would be discouraged from volunteering and would view it in a negative way if this bill was agreed to without the amendments. We should encourage the youth of this state to volunteer, not force them. This encouragement will build a positive attitude towards volunteering in the hearts and minds of young people.

In conclusion, if the youth members of this House have any sense of civil service they will vote against this bill as it stands.

YOUTH MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING: Since my first experience of community service I have endured and accepted the fundamental goals and beliefs of acting in the community. I have always supported making community service compulsory. The opposition leader was talking about human rights. This youth bill has been a long time coming. The opposition leader talks about Queenslanders becoming slaves. How absurd. The last time I checked, slaves were owned. I will say that now, because the opposition will come back and claim that this youth bill is attempting to do that. However, Queenslanders who are participating in this program are not being forced to pick up papers along the roadside; they are being forced to get involved in community service that helps their futures.

This youth bill promotes growth and establishes a bright future for all. The youth are constantly being criticised for having their heads in a tunnel, only viewing their future and their future alone. This youth bill removes the blinkers and brings back life in the community which, for a long time, has been steering away from caring for one's neighbour. Society has become about one's own unit, constantly doing our own thing.

The opposition is talking about human rights. What is this all about? There are positive flow-on effects to the community. This bill makes community service compulsory, but the stigma behind this is that the opposition is wrong and it is not telling us what to do. It is telling us that we can help in our community and brighten our futures. If members are interested in becoming a future leader, they can volunteer in such organisations. This whole week would make up 100 hours.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR EVERTON: Although the motive behind this bill is surely altruistic, the means are completely unacceptable. By the way, in response to the youth member for Burleigh's comment earlier about the definition of slavery, when the United States banned slavery following the civil war its constitution also made reference to another term called involuntary servitude. That is what this bill proposes.

In a free, democratic society such as Australia, the oxymoron of compulsory volunteerism cannot stand. Not only is it a breach of our freedom of choice; its proposed penalties are far too extreme. Furthermore, a government mandated program cannot possibly compete with private, individually chosen volunteer work in terms of the passion and the quality displayed.

If anything this bill, if passed as read, will choke the spirit of volunteerism that permeates Queensland society. Instead of being an opportunity to be seized, civil service will most likely become viewed as a chore to be avoided or completed as fast as possible and never dealt with again. By the way, while we are legislating away our rights and freedoms, why do we not just bring back the draft and invade Fiji? We could all just go on a tropical holiday for the weekend! The government thinks it can solve all of our problems. 'The individual is too lazy,' they say. 'The individual is too selfish,' they say. The opposition will not accept this bill and it should not be passed.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER: This brilliant bill that the innovative and forward-thinking government is sponsoring will create a giving culture in the youth which will have exponential benefits to the community now and in the future. The opposition has verbal diarrhoea—dribbling out of their mouths with unfounded allusions to communism, then to fascism. I do not think they understand. All they are about is their democratic rights—their rights. What about responsibilities? Public office is all about giving to the community. If you cannot perform civil service, you obviously are unfit to give to the community. Similarly, you are unfit to vote if you refuse to contribute to society.

Civil service is education. Civil service gives insights and experiences that the participant would otherwise be unable to gain. Civil service is fundamental to fostering enlightenment and civic responsibility, which is vital for harmonious and great society. So why should it not be compulsory? School is compulsory. Parents can be heavily fined or even jailed if their children do not attend school. Those consequences are much more severe than the ones proposed in this bill. Civil service is education for life which is just as important as the education provided by schools and therefore must be made compulsory. Support this bill.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NANANGO: Friends, Queenslanders, comrades: I present to the chair an extremist, fascist based government. We see the love child of Hitler and Stalin in our wonderful youth minister for education. Is it just me, or does the member for Beaudesert look a little bit like Kim Jong-il in disguise?

YOUTH MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Madam Deputy Speaker, a point of order. That is a personal insult, that the Deputy Premier would feel any kind of emotion towards Stalin or Hitler to create a love child.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NANANGO: I said nothing about the Deputy Premier, actually.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is pretty offensive. Would the honourable member withdraw your reference to any kind of relationship between those two people?

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NANANGO: I apologise for any inference that may have been taken. I was actually speaking about Hitler with Stalin—nothing to do with the Deputy Premier. I take it back.

Our government basically is a bunch of totalitarian fools. While we are on totalitarianism, let us look at the proposed penalties put forward by the government: no vote for people who do not do it. That's it: take away their basic human rights. That's a good democratic government for you! Nothing like Hitler and the SS—nothing like them! Full of bourgeois. That's all they are: bourgeois, not willing to get their hands dirty at any time.

A government youth member interjected.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NANANGO: That's right. They said it: 'If they are poor, disenfranchise them. They are not important anyway.' They talk about the benefit of the youth of Queensland. Why not? The pyramids benefited the slaves in Egypt. Why won't it work here? I present to you here the slavedrivers of the fourth Reich.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NICKLIN: It is quite clear that the opposition's response to this bill highlights the sense of apathy and laziness within Queensland youth and further strengthens the need for a mandatory program. Essentially, this bill is about social equity and responsibility—taking back the lost ground—

An opposition youth member interjected.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NICKLIN: Can anyone hear that? I think it's the wind. Moving on. It allows the young community to contribute directly within their area of expertise or interest to the thriving economy and social community of this fine state. It aims to stamp out social segregation while instilling a sense of philanthropic value within the young community. This bill is proactive, constructive and can only benefit Queensland communities and the individuals within them. As a multicultural state, this program establishes equality that spans the cultural boundaries of religion, race and social interaction and can only benefit Queensland. It builds unity between the diverse cultures that make up the community, closing the gap between youth who often find themselves in the middle of a political and cultural crossfire—a crossfire the opposition wish to leave these vulnerable individuals of our community to face on their own.

This bill supports the plight of Queensland youth and ensures the strengthened sense of unity in the next generation of Queensland leaders. This government is committed to embracing multiculturalism and heightening the value of youth within their communities. This bill is the solution to youth boredom and laziness and it provides an assurance that the next generation of Queenslanders will be capable of serving the Queensland people. The bill turns the attention of youth off themselves and on to their fellow Queenslanders, and attitudes that are birthed from such a mentality can only contribute positively to our state.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR WARREGO: Take these two words: 'compulsory' and 'voluntary'. These words are completely opposite. The government have put these two words into their bill and tried to say that it is voluntary. How is it voluntary if it is compulsory? Furthermore, haven't youth got enough to fill in their time at present? The state's education system is at its lowest level. It is going to fall to the bottom of the education curriculum totem pole of Australia if the government keep taking the time that we need to study.

What will compulsory volunteerism do to the jobs that are present and the areas that the government wish to put these volunteers in? People are working in those areas. Putting volunteers in those areas, not paying them wages and taking somebody else's job: I call that slavery. Don't you think that a civilian paying taxes is giving enough back to the community and showing responsibility? I would love to know what the government is doing at present, because this bill is an indication that they do not know anything and they do not know what to do with this state.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE: We have all seen the media reports of today's youth. We as the young people of Australia are seen, thanks to young people like Corey Worthington, as scum. First of all, I must say that it appears that the opposition appears to greatly misunderstand the bill. How, I ask, is this bill impeding our rights? All this bill does is educate the youth and add much needed assistance within communities. Within this bill there is no definition of civil service because civil service, I must say, is very broad. Civil service is not national service and does not consist of military responsibilities, as has been stated by the opposition.

Most youths in this chamber were present at the youth parliament forum earlier in the year. I ask the opposition to think back to their time with the representatives of Volunteering Queensland, who made note that civil service comprises much, much more than formally constructed programs. Furthermore, many daily activities that we already participate in come under this—especially this week, which has already been discussed.

One hundred hours equates to just two hours a week. As you can see in the penalties section, the penalties are decided on a case-by-case basis. Failure to complete just a few hours will not result in a full loss of rights. As I said, 100 hours is required to be completed in order to earn the right to vote. Young people have to earn the right to drive by doing 100 hours of driving experience. Isn't voting a greater responsibility? I must also ask the opposition how this bill discriminates against those in regional areas. Everyone has the right to make a difference, and that is what this bill does.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MOGGILL: The right to freedom. The right to vote. The right to life. The member for Waterford asked whether people deserve these basic human rights. May I suggest that we take away the rights of the government and see how they like it. The gloss of performing a charitable deed, of volunteering one's time, is immensely important to oneself. It is of worth to that person and creates a sense of connection and accomplishment.

This bill will destroy all of this for the thousands of youth volunteers by filling the volunteering force with dull, disinterested and disconnected youth. I can assure you that if I was forced to give up my own personal time I would not, as the honourable member for Albert stated, be understanding and compassionate. I would make life hell for everyone I came into contact with.

I would urge the government to look into the mirror and hand themselves in to the courts before they force this regime upon the youth of this state. Before undermining the vital role and the value to oneself of volunteering, I urge the House to disregard this bill in all its forms.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA: I read this speech on behalf of the member for Southern Downs. Every day in our communities older residents wake up early and head off into their communities to help out other residents in the community, look after plants and animals, and cook scones for community morning teas. Whilst this is going on, many young people are still in bed, sleeping their days away. Stop taking and start giving. It is for reasons mentioned above that this bill is a step in the right direction.

From the age of 16 to the age of 21, young people will be required to perform 500 hours of registered civil service—over five years. This equates to a mere two hours a week. The 100 hours which needs to be completed every year can be undertaken at any given time by the young person, according to their convenience. If a young person cannot perform their civic duty due to financial disadvantage, physical disability, time constraints, severe health problems or any other situation that the young person feels would affect their ability to complete their civic duty, the government has lots of flexibility in this area in terms of the number of hours which will need to be completed. A generation of good acts will surely generate good. Individuals will reach out, heal and be healed. The wounds of society cannot go untreated any longer. Stop taking and start giving.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD: We the opposition like civil service. We volunteer. We give to our community and we enjoy doing it. We do it because we like to give to others. We the opposition are givers. Those in the government are not. They are takers. This government wants to take my freedom to make my own choices. This government wants to take the feel-good vibe I get from giving and turn it into forced labour. In addition to taking my right to live my life my way, this government wants to punish me for giving too much. It is quite the contradiction. First the government says that I have to undertake 500 hours of civil service, but in the next sentence this youth bill says that I can only get recognition for a maximum of 100 hours of service a year. Where is my right to complete my civil service the year before I go to university?

The government wants to take my right to spend my free time my way, and now they are telling me that I will not receive any benefit for giving too much. Volunteerism often leads to employment opportunities. Half of the jobs I have had in my life have been as a result of my volunteering. If this bill is passed, organisations that pay volunteers will be fined and lose their registration. This government does not just want to take from young people; they also want to take from community organisations. Community organisations choosing to recognise the valued role a volunteer plays in their organisations will lead to a loss of all volunteers, a crippling fact for any community organisation based on volunteers. This government will take our freedom. They will take our jobs, our licence, our use of public transport. They will also take our right to vote them out of office. We the opposition want to give young people a fair go. If unamended, I implore the House to vote down this bill.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BULIMBA: Today I rise to discuss this bill before the House. As the Youth Minister for Education, Arts and Training, I understand that we must have a shovel-ready army to walk forward into the future, forward on to the Brandenburg Gate—I mean, to the Brisbane River. What we must have in this state is a larger state. We must have the government having major control. We must have them regulating. Regulation is good. We must remember that without regulation we would have them here!

Youth member for Algester: I loved the speech if it was not a bit of a diatribe. I have to remind the members opposite that this bill before the House is trying to get the youth with a certain mindset, a certain mindset for the future—a mindset for the future that will develop them beyond their fullest capacities, a mindset that will develop them into the youth of tomorrow and the government of tomorrow. This will not pass! We shall not accept failure! This government stands strong. We stand strong for ideology. We stand strong under the Brandenburg—I mean Brisbane River—

Honourable youth members interjected.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BULIMBA: I am terribly sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. The youth member for Nanango is the king of mangoes and the king of the opposition. He has a mind, but let me tell you it is as sharp as a stake and it will take down the Youth Leader of the Opposition as quickly as it did me.

A YOUTH MEMBER: I rise to a point of order. There was a personal attack against the youth member for Nanango. He is not in fact the king of mangoes.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Could I ask if the youth member for Nanango is in fact offended by being called the king of mangoes.

Youth member for Nanango interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the honourable youth member to withdraw.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BULIMBA: And that is why Bob Hawke is offended! I withdraw and apologise. Today it is this government that marches forward into the future, marches forward for mandatory volunteering. We will see the youth complete 500 hours of slavery—I mean voluntary volunteering. We will walk forward into the future and develop the youth of tomorrow with a mindset for tomorrow.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BROADWATER: I want to give my insight. I am actually a volunteer. I spend two hours each week actually volunteering. I would like to point out that volunteering is a huge part of my life. It makes me who I am and is a very enjoyable experience. If you make volunteering compulsory, people will not get this experience out of it. It is meant to be rewarding. If you make it compulsory, the rewards just vanish. You have to enjoy what you are doing to get the reward out of it. I would also like to point out that there are abounding opportunities for volunteering throughout my area. There are many opportunities for young people to get involved with volunteering, and at my school it is encouraged.

I am not sure about other people out there, but if you are interested in volunteering there are opportunities to do it. So why make it compulsory? I also want to point out that two hours each week is actually a lot of time. It takes a whole afternoon and night out of my week and you are proposing that teenagers do that every week for an entire year. That is a huge commitment. That is not even allowing any breaks or anything. I just find that a bit ridiculous.

YOUTH DEPUTY PREMIER: I have walked in the opposition's shoes, quite literally, and to be perfectly honest I am sick of it. I am sick of selfishness. I am sick of a country that takes and takes and takes and does not want to give back. The reality is that these penalties apply to people who you do not want elected to office. The truth of the matter is that I do not want the kind of people who will not complete these activities—this civil service—to have the benefits that they have. I do not want them to have that much of control over society. They are clearly not the kind of people we want to have in control of society. Penalties are applied accordingly. They are not applied entirely. They are applied according to the degree of—

An honourable youth member interjected.

DEPUTY YOUTH PREMIER: Think about it, please. Honestly, if you are going to say something, do it properly. I would suggest, Madam Deputy Speaker, that she do it properly. True volunteers do not mind if the rest of the state helps as well. True volunteers care about the act, not just about the feeling. True volunteers only care about the overall effect of the act. It teaches appreciation for what they have been given in life. We are in an age of complete and total affluence. I am sick of it, and this I believe is the cure for affluence. The reality is that society is sick and I personally believe that this is a cure. The reality is that it is ultimately the good that is being achieved that we should care about, not about the individual feeling generated by it.

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

Motion agreed to.

Youth bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 10—

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH: I move the following amendments—

1 Clause 3 (Definitions)

At page 4, after line 26

Insert—

'**HECS-HELP** a loan available to eligible students enrolled in Commonwealth supported places at university. A HECS-HELP loan will cover all or part of the student contribution amount required for university fees.'

'**QCE** The QCE is Queensland's senior school qualification, which is awarded to eligible students usually at the end of Year 12. The QCE recognises broad learning options and offers flexibility in what, where and when learning occurs. Recognised studies include Australian Music Examinations Board and Auto Trade College.'

2 Clause 7 (Licensing Requirements)

At page 7, lines 10-12

Omit

3 Clause 9 (Reduction of Hours)

At page 8, lines 16-17

Omit

4 Clause 10 (Exemption from program)

At page 8, lines 18-23

Omit

5 Part 5 (Penalties)

At Page 8, after line 24 to page 9, line 12

Omit, insert—

'Part 6 Incentives

10. Incentives to complete program

- (1) If a person completes the required civil service hours within the five-year period, they are entitled to—
 - (a) 50% discount on public transport for the lifetime of persons who complete civil service hours and;
 - (b) 2 credit points, for the hours completed by a student within their high school years, to contribute to the total of 20 credit points required for senior students to obtain a QCE
- (2) In addition to the entitlements provided in section 1, individuals who complete the program may choose to receive one of the following benefits—
 - (b) an allowance solely for those participating in higher education, amounting to no more than a 20% reduction of HECS-HELP debt or;
 - (b) a tax break for those participating in vocational training, amounting to an equivalent of the average discount given to those receiving s10(2)(a), calculated as an average for each financial year, until completion of the participant's training
- (3) 25% of all jobs within the public sector and government owned agencies, including government internships and apprenticeships as well as graduate programs, are to be reserved for persons completing the civil service program
- (4) Section 10(2) is to be means tested according to the specific needs of an individual, as assessed by the Commission, and is to be paid regardless of whether a participants has a HECS-HELP debt or pays their higher education fees upfront'

While the debate so far has been contentious and heated, I would like to stress that both the government and the opposition can agree that getting young people involved in community service is essential. However, this bill fails to ensure that Queensland young people enjoy the full benefits of civil service. The amendments submitted by the opposition promote the benefits of volunteering to young people.

By creating a bill that does not force teens into service, the opposition is ensuring the spirit of service lives on. The values and benefits of community service are only truly experienced when the participant is fully open and willing to serve. In the long term, forcing youth to volunteer will only create an environment of resentment and negativity. The amendments ensure that those serving the community are truly committed to the cause and that charity and community groups do not have to deal with the burden of babysitting teenagers who are only showing up because their government forces them to.

The second part of the amendments ensure that young people associate community service with rewards rather than punishments. By replacing the unjust penalties with a fair incentive program, the amendments foster a society that rewards those who truly deserve it. The opposition believes in the

values of community service and is committed to passing a bill that benefits both individuals and the community at large. The amendments offer a compromise in the hope that together the government and the opposition can ultimately stand behind a fair and just bill.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR ALBERT: Some 75 per cent of my family is disabled—that is, my mother, my father and my brother. So I have to run a household and I have to work for a living. Somehow I have to manage a household at the age of 15. I think I would know about volunteering, and yet I am not alone. I know for a fact that this bill would help others in similar situations to my own. I have enough trouble maintaining my grades at school, let alone being forced to run a household on my own. But, once again, I am not alone. If I and fellow young carers had the opportunity to be relieved for just two hours a week, I know personally how much it would help.

I volunteer with my family because I have moral objectives. Without me, my household would not stand as strong as it does today. At present, as I am here with Youth Parliament, I am not able to fulfil my duties. Therefore, we have a volunteer in my house completing daily tasks such as cooking, cleaning and bathing. I urge the opposition to pass this bill as it promotes a community that works together and values citizens who engage with their surroundings.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR ALGESTER: I would like to confirm that the opposition is a supporter of civil service. In fact, we applaud the ideas of the government and can understand the basis of such a bill. Unfortunately, the opposition in good conscience cannot pass it as is. We are, however, offering a compromise. Although our amendments may fundamentally alter the nature of the bill, I believe that we can work in cooperation with the government in order to ensure the best outcome for Queenslanders. Our amendments consists of two major points—turning penalties into amendments and making a compulsory program voluntary. Our incentives give disadvantaged youth an opportunity to graduate from grade 12 with a QCE certificate, ensuring they have access to tertiary education.

Education and furthering the opportunities of disadvantaged youth are a priority of the opposition, and I assume that this correlates with the intentions of the government. We propose to give those who complete this program an allowance amounting to no more than 20 per cent of their HECS-HELP debt and the average of this amount to be given to those youth completing apprenticeships or higher training. This truly promotes a future where Queensland can rightfully call itself the Smart State, where it gives access to education for all young people. This allowance can be spent at the discretion of the young person and the aim is for it to assist the cost of basic living and housing for those who usually have to move.

We have ensured that this will only be effective for disadvantaged youth because, to be honest, the people least likely to complete this program are those who are privileged because we have means tested the allowance. The government also proposes that one-quarter of all jobs will be reserved for people who complete the program which means that for those disadvantaged youth there will be fewer people to compete with for jobs and more opportunities to contribute to society.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR WATERFORD: The opposition to me seem like puppets—duck puppets, if I dare say so. Puppets, much like the opposition, seem to spout fiction, not fact. This is what they are doing—and this is what they should be doing—unless they have their facts straight, unless they have experienced slavery and Hitler firsthand. People ask me why I am here. I am here to stand for what I believe in.

Madam Deputy Speaker, imagine this: a small child sitting in the streets because he or she is homeless. The child is not washed in over two weeks and is getting by on an occasional meal from the closest shelter. And that is if he is lucky enough to get in—otherwise, it is bin scraps. How would anyone picture this child? Now imagine another youth walking past and seeing a fellow member of his society suffering, only to ask themselves—in fact, I ask Madam Deputy Speaker to ask herself, ‘How would I feel if that were me?’

From personal experience, if I were the youth walking past I would immediately and gladly give up my time to help, even if it was just to buy a meal so that the child could get through the next day or two. I volunteer at many organisations such as shelters, nursing homes, the Salvation Army, St Vinnies, as well as Rotary and Quota clubs. I no longer do volunteer work to pay back society after helping me through my hardship; I do it for the feeling of pride because I know I have helped a person. The material and monetary incentives the opposition wants—

(Time expired)

Division: Question put—That the youth member’s amendments be agreed to.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clauses 3 to 10, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 11 to 16, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

YOUTH DEPUTY PREMIER: I move—

That the youth bill, as amended, be now read a third time.

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

Resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

YOUTH DEPUTY PREMIER: I move—

That the long title of the youth bill be agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Congratulations. That was fantastic. It is not often we hear a debate in here. We often have speeches but not debate, so that was great. I was writing things down thinking I was going to get a chance to say something, which would have been odd. I think you all behaved remarkably well. Even your interjections were very well ordered. I think some of you have a great future, probably in here, and I hope I am around to at least watch it on television. Thank you very much.

Youth Parliament adjourned at 1.23 pm