EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

With reference to page 40 of the Capital Statement, can the Minister provide a) the number of schools that have been air conditioned in 2019/20, b) the number of schools that will be air conditioned in 2020/21, c) whether the $341.25 million funding commitment includes maintenance or replacement units and if so how much, and d) the amount of funding required to upgrade electricity connections?

ANSWER:

An audit of schools outside the old Cooler Schools Zone finished in late November 2019 and determined that 649 schools required some level of air conditioning.

This audit also determined that some schools would require upgrades to their electrical systems in order to accommodate the additional electricity load on the network.

Our $477 million Cooler Cleaner Schools Program (CCSP), announced in February 2020, reset and enhanced the program allowing for libraries and staff rooms—as well as classrooms—to be included in the CCSP.

As at Monday 7 December 2020, 427 of the 649 schools have had air conditioning installed and are fully operational. Of the 222 remaining:

- 134 are still being assessed; and
- 88 require either an internal or external electrical upgrade.

Sixty-nine schools have not yet had a contract awarded for air conditioning or any electrical upgrades; however, we are on target for all schools to be air conditioned by June 2022, as previously announced.

The Department of Education will fund all electrical upgrades in relation to the air conditioning of schools as part of the CCSP.

We thank our hard-working P&Cs and school communities for their work so far; however, our ongoing funding through the CCSP means schools can be confident that their future air conditioning needs will be catered for.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 2

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

With reference to page 27 of the SDS, can the Minister advise the projected number of FTE teachers and teacher aides in 2023/24 required to meet the election commitment?

ANSWER:

The projected number of teachers and teacher aides required in 2023–24 are based on forecasts for enrolment growth. Each year the number of teachers and teacher aides allocated to schools are based on the actual enrolments at each school.

The current enrolment forecasts indicate that in 2024, the Department of Education will employ the equivalent of almost 50,000 full-time teachers and the equivalent of more than 11,000 full-time teacher aides.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 3

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

With reference to page 27 of the SDS, can the Minister advise a date when the trial placement of 20 General Practitioners will commence in 20 state secondary schools, the cost of the trial and how the 20 schools will be determined?

ANSWER:

The Palaszczuk Government has committed $4.74 million over three years from 2021–22 to pilot a program placing General Practitioners (GPs) in up to 20 Queensland state secondary schools in areas of greatest need.

The Department of Education is collaborating with internal and external stakeholders to ensure that schools with high levels of need are identified for participation in the pilot.

Eligible schools will be invited to apply to be part of the pilot and will need to demonstrate how providing access to a GP at school will benefit their students.

The department will work with schools that currently facilitate GP services to inform the implementation of the pilot.

It is anticipated that GPs will begin operating in some secondary school sites in the second half of 2021.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 4

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

With reference to page 27 of the SDS, can the Minister advise how the 120 homework hubs in schools will be rolled out, a date when the program will commence and the criteria for school selection in the program?

ANSWER:

The Palaszczuk Government has allocated $8 million over four years for Homework Centres in up to 120 primary and secondary state schools.

All schools will be invited to apply to host a Homework Centre.

Consultation with stakeholders to finalise selection criteria will occur in early 2021.

Rollout of the Homework Centres will begin in Semester 2, 2021.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 5

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

With reference to page 27 of the SDS, can the Minister advise the amount of funding provided for the Independent Public Schools program in 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 (reported separately by year)?

ANSWER:

The Department of Education will provide $12.5 million in grant funding directly to Independent Public Schools in 2021.

Funding for 2022, 2023 and 2024 will be considered as part of normal budget processes.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 6

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

With reference to page 27 of the SDS, can the Minister outline the number of fraud and/or misconduct investigations currently being undertaken either by Education Queensland or the Crime and Corruption Commission, regarding employees with specific reference to the overall types of complaints and the number of staff currently on suspension as a result of these investigations?

ANSWER:

It is not appropriate to comment on investigations currently being undertaken by either the Department of Education or the Crime and Corruption Commission.

The Public Service Commission meets its legislative requirement under section 88N of the *Public Service Act 2008* to publish annual conduct and performance data by 30 September each year.

A link to this report is below:

https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/2019-20-conduct-and-performance-data

The Public Service Commission data does not include matters involving corrupt conduct.

Corrupt conduct matters fall under the jurisdiction of the Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC) and a corruption allegations data dashboard is published at Corruption allegations data dashboard | CCC - Crime and Corruption Commission Queensland.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 7

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

With reference to page 30 of the SDS, can the Minister advise the number of compliance actions including the number and cost of a) successful and b) unsuccessful prosecutions that were undertaken by the Labour Hire Licensing Unit in 2019/20?

ANSWER:

The number of compliance actions including the number and cost of a) successful and b) unsuccessful prosecutions that were undertaken by the Labour Hire Licensing Unit in 2019–20 are set out below:

Compliance actions	1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020
Number of audits and investigations finalised	555
Number of compliance actions (administrative) - **refusal to grant a licence** - **withdrawal for failure to provide compliance information** - **licence issued with condition** - **licence suspension** - **licence cancellation**	 23 45 16 66 50 TOTAL: 200
Number of prosecutions	a) Successful – 6 Unlicensed provider (section 10) – 3 Unlicensed provider party to offence (section 10 and 92) – 2 Entering arrangement with unlicensed provider (section 11) – 1 b) Unsuccessful – 0

The cost associated with prosecutions action (legal fees) in 2019–20 was $8700.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 8

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

With reference to page 33 of the SDS, can the Minister provide the number of FTE staff in 2019/20 and allocated in 2020/21, reported separately by year and business unit?

ANSWER:

A breakdown of the Department of Education's full-time equivalents (FTE) is detailed in the table below:

Department of Education	**2019–20 Actual**	**2020–21 Budget**
Early Childhood Education and Care	319	301
School Education	72,801	74,145
Office of Industrial Relations	851	885
Racing		3
TOTAL	**73,971**	**75,334**

2020–21 Budget allocations are based on March MOHRI point-in-time data, which is considered more indicative of the department's FTE numbers, especially school based staff, which tend to fluctuate across the year due to a number of reasons including vacancies and staff on leave.

Allocations to schools for the 2021 calendar year will not occur until after 5 February 2021 when the department undertakes its Day 8 enrolment count.

The department will continue to manage its internal resourcing distribution to remain within its overall departmental forecast as outlined in the SDS.

The 2019–20 actual staff attributed across the Early Childhood service area represents the number of full-time equivalent staff being paid from Early Childhood cost centres at the time of the quarterly MOHRI snapshot being taken. It includes a small number of regional staff later attributed to the Education service area. There has been no reduction in Early Childhood staff allocation.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 9

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

With reference to volume 2, page 27 of the SDS, would the Minister outline what portion of the Building Future Schools Fund will be allocated during the 2020-2021 financial year to acquire land in the Hinchinbrook electorate to keep up with population growth in Townsville's northern beaches?

ANSWER:

The Building Future Schools Fund is the mechanism by which new schools are planned, land is acquired and new schools are delivered. The Building Future Schools Fund has a record investment of $1.69 billion from 2017–18 to 2024–25 to address enrolment growth.

In 2020–21, $514.251 million is allocated to invest in the expansion of existing schools, the construction of new schools, the strategic acquisition of land and land augmentations.

Of this, $142.872 million has been allocated for new school land acquisitions and augmentation of existing schools by acquiring adjacent land parcels.

The Department of Education conducts ongoing planning to ensure that all students have access to high-quality educational facilities.

The department closely monitors enrolment growth in state schools, and school infrastructure demand mapping is conducted through the Queensland Schools Planning Reference Committee (QSPRC), in consultation with local government and the non-government school sector.

A QSPRC demand mapping meeting was held with Townsville City Council on 10 March 2020. At this meeting it was identified that three to four new state or non-state primary schools and two new state or non-state secondary schools may be required in the Deeragun Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) by 2041. It was also identified that up to two new state or non-state primary schools may be required in the neighbouring Bohle Plains and Mount Louisa SA2s over the same timeframe.

To support the future schooling needs of this area, the department is acquiring land in the suburb of Mount Low by agreement under section 15 of the *Acquisition of Land Act 1967* (the Act).

The department is unable to disclose the budget for specific acquisitions, as this is commercial-in-confidence until a property has settled. If acquisitions are undertaken through the Act, the Act has mechanisms by which the value of the transaction is determined and resolved between the parties.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 10

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

With reference to volume 2, page 32 of the SDS, will the minister provide a breakdown of the key infrastructure projects outside south-east Queensland that will receive funding from the *Racing Infrastructure Fund* and how can the Queensland Government better support Queensland country racing?

ANSWER:

The Palaszczuk Government supports Queensland country racing by providing funding for key infrastructure projects outside South East Queensland (SEQ). An example of this is the Townsville Turf Club Tie-Up Stalls project, which has been allocated $1.5 million from the Racing Infrastructure Fund (RIF) for 100 tie-up stalls. This project was approved by the Queensland Government in September 2020 and is currently under construction.

Prior to redevelopment of the tie-up stalls, in March 2019, $150,000 from the RIF was approved for civil rectification works at the Townsville Turf Club.

On 30 September 2020, Racing Queensland (RQ) concluded 249 projects for infrastructure upgrades for race clubs across Queensland. These projects were funded under the $6 million Country and Regional Capital Works Program, of which over $4.9 million went to projects outside SEQ.

This $6 million funding program was established under the RIF supporting projects to upgrade racing infrastructure across all three racing codes, including barriers, fencing, running rails, tie-up stalls, towers, track upgrades and water harvesting. These types of projects address animal welfare and workplace safety and allow a safe and sustainable future for racing.

Separately, the Queensland Government has extended the current Country Racing Program for a further two years until 2022–23 with funding of $35.2 million on top of the original commitment of $70.4 million over four years totalling $105.6 million to country racing and the people of regional Queensland.

This program includes an allocation of $2.6 million a year for non-TAB racing club infrastructure repairs, maintenance, asset replenishment or replacement. To date, over 130 projects across Queensland, valued at $6.5 million, have been funded under this infrastructure funding.

The Country Racing Program provides security and continuity to the country racing community up to 2023 by funding race meetings, prize money and racing infrastructure, repairs and maintenance.

Further, the Queensland Government approved improvements to the Country Racing Program so clubs can apply to deliver their own projects and clubs can aggregate funding from multiple sources, to gain better value for money.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 11

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

Can the Minister advise the total infrastructure budget for 2020/21 and how this funding will be used to build, maintain, improve and update our schools, and support Queensland jobs?

ANSWER:

Under the 2020–21 Infrastructure Investment Portfolio, the Palaszczuk Government is investing $1.954 billion (excluding plant and equipment) for the construction and refurbishment of school educational facilities and early childhood education and care services.

Capital works planning targets priorities by considering population growth, changes in educational needs and addresses high-priority needs for student and staff health and safety.

This funding will be used to:

- provide general and specialist classroom facilities to cater for growth for enrolments in schools;
- provide administration facilities to cater for growth in schools;
- complete the construction of new schools to open in 2021 at Palmview, Pimpama, Baringa and Dutton Park;
- start the construction of new schools to open in 2022 at North Maclean, Caloundra South and Coomera;
- plan for schools opening in 2023, including a new primary school in Brisbane's inner west, and beyond;
- renew school infrastructure including learning spaces, administrations, amenities, carparks;
- continue to air condition and install solar panels on school roofs;
- undertake the maintenance of the State's $21 billion asset base with a spend of $266.8 million; and
- start the delivery of a $235 million halls and the $45 million future education skills pathways programs.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 12

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

Can the Minister inform the Committee of new state schools to be opened over the next three years and further planning for new schools beyond 2023?

ANSWER:

The Palaszczuk Government is investing $1.69 billion through the Building Future Schools (BFS) Program to deliver new schools and expansion projects for students in fast growing communities across Queensland.

In 2020, eight new schools were opened in some of Queensland's fastest growing communities (seven of these were funded by the BFS program):

- Calliope State High School;
- Fortitude Valley State Secondary College;
- Foxwell State Secondary College in Coomera;
- Lee Street State Special School in Caboolture;
- Mango Hill State Secondary College;
- Ripley Valley State School;
- Ripley Valley State Secondary College; and
- Yarrabilba State Secondary College.

In 2021, the BFS Program will deliver the following five additional five schools:

- Baringa State Secondary College;
- Brisbane South State Secondary College;
- Gainsborough State School;
- Palmview State Primary School; and
- Palmview State Special School.

In 2022, the BFS Program will deliver a further three new schools including a:

- state school in Caloundra South
- state school in North Maclean (Greenbank); and
- special school in Coomera.

In 2023, the BFS program will deliver a new primary school in Brisbane's inner-west.

The Department of Education builds new schools where there is an unavoidable requirement to construct a new school, for example no schools exist in new greenfield development areas or densification of an area has led to existing schools reaching their developable capacity.

The department is planning further new schools into the future. Possible sites for future schools include:

- New primary schools in:
    - Augustine Heights / Redbank Plains;
    - Bahrs Scrub;
    - Bellbird Park / Brookwater;
    - Burpengary East;
    - Logan Reserve / Crestmead;
    - Redland Bay (Shoreline);
    - Ripley;
    - Springfield;
    - Toowoomba; and
    - Yarrabilba.
- New secondary schools in:
    - Logan Reserve / Park Ridge East;
    - Greater Flagstone;
    - Palmview;
    - Redbank Plains; and
    - Springfield.
- A new special school in Springfield-Redbank.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 13

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

Can the Minister advise the Committee of measures to support young people to engage and re-engage into education, employment or training?

ANSWER:

The Department of Education has established innovative approaches to support all young Queenslanders to remain engaged or reconnect with their education, training or employment pathways.

FlexiSpaces

FlexiSpaces, an Australian Education Award winning initiative, provides flexible learning experiences within mainstream schools.

FlexiSpaces are operational in 17 schools across the State, with another 15 commencing in 2021 and a further 20 planned for 2022. FlexiSpaces support students who may be at risk of leaving early to stay connected to their learning in a mainstream school setting. Continuing their education at their mainstream school is their best chance of success.

The Palaszczuk Government is investing $16.6 million over four years, including $10 million in school refurbishments, to establish up to 52 FlexiSpaces by 2022.

Regional Youth Engagement Hubs

Regional Youth Engagement Hubs were established in every education region across Queensland in 2017. The Hubs are dedicated teams providing youth engagement services to connect with and case manage disengaged young people, supporting them to reconnect with an education, training or employment pathway. The Palaszczuk Government has committed $11.2 million over four years to provide this service.

Over the 2019 school year, Regional Youth Engagement Hub staff connected with and supported over 4500 young Queenslanders.

Link and Launch

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to supporting young people who successfully complete Year 12 to take the next step and connect with further education, training or employment in the year after school.

We are doing this through Link and Launch, with schools supporting young people who are not in study or work after completing Year 12 to make a transition. Link and Launch officers will be operating in up to 30 school sites across the state by 2022, through an investment of $8 million over four years.

In the first 12 months of the Link and Launch initiative, nearly 300 young people have made a transition to study, training or work, or in a small number of cases to another specialist service provider such as a disability employment service.

Digital Engagement Strategy

To complement these initiatives, a digital engagement strategy has been launched to provide young people disengaging from education, and their parents, with information they need, when they need it, at their fingertips. The *We the Differents* and *Spark their Future* online platforms have been highly successful to date, with over 70,000 unique web page views in just over seven months, exceeding industry standards for education sites without any paid promotion.

The department also works with its partner departments and agencies to provide responses for our most vulnerable young people, including through the Youth Engagement Alliance.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 14

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

Can the Minister advise on action the Palaszczuk Government is taking to support kindergarten participation and access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from vulnerable and disadvantaged communities?

ANSWER:

The Palaszczuk Government has implemented a number of initiatives to support kindergarten participation and access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

In 2020–21, this Government will invest up to $173.4 million through the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme (QKFS) to approved long day care and kindergarten services to reduce out-of-pocket costs for families. The QKFS Plus subsidy provides additional support to eligible low income families enrolled at all services to help them access low or no-cost kindy. All children that identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander are also eligible for QKFS Plus.

The Palaszczuk Government is expanding the Remote Kindergarten Program by providing $12 million over four years from 2021 to 2024 to include state schools more than 40km from the nearest kindergarten program provider.

The State Delivered Kindergarten program supports access to kindergarten in remote communities where the market is not viable due to low or variable numbers of children. In 2020, there are 100 State Delivered Kindergarten programs across 82 state schools in rural and remote locations, including 31 kindergarten programs delivered in state schools in discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Since 2016, the Department of Education has invested $3 million in the Institute of Urban Indigenous Health's *Deadly Kindies* program, which aims to improve participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in kindergarten.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 15

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

Can the Minister inform the Committee of initiatives in the budget to support student well-being?

ANSWER:

The Palaszczuk Government has committed $100 million for a student wellbeing package to increase the wellbeing workforce in Queensland state schools over three years.

This student wellbeing package will:

- ensure every Queensland primary and secondary state school student has access to a psychologist or similar wellbeing professional (including Guidance Officers, psychologists, mental health coaches, social workers, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists); and
- pilot a program placing General Practitioners (GPs) in 20 Queensland state secondary schools in areas of greatest need.

The initiative will increase wellbeing professionals in Queensland state schools by up to 464 full-time equivalents over three years. This will improve the ratio of school wellbeing professionals to students from current levels (approximately 1:1060) to around 1:565.

Increasing the number of wellbeing professionals working in schools will ensure students in priority schools, including regional and remote schools, have access to wellbeing and mental health support.

The pilot, which will place GPs in 20 Queensland state secondary schools, will increase the accessibility of GPs to students in areas of high need and assist with the early identification of health and mental health concerns to ensure students receive timely support. The pilot seeks to make health care, including mental health care, more accessible to students at no cost to them or their families. Supporting access to a GP will also enable the early identification of health issues, including mental health and wellbeing concerns, ensuring that they receive timely and appropriate specialist support.

This additional student wellbeing package will enhance the significant investment already made by the Palaszczuk Government to support the mental health and wellbeing of school aged students including:

- approximately 750 Guidance Officers and 75 Senior Guidance Officers in Queensland state schools;

- eight specialist Guidance Officer – Mental Health positions to provide support to students across the state with complex mental health needs; and
- eight Principal Advisors – Mental Health to provide advice to school staff about adopting a whole-school approach to supporting students' wellbeing and mental health.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 16

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

Can the Minister outline what actions and plans the Government has been put in place to support workers with occupational lung disease and an update on the response to addressing silicosis in the engineered stone industry?

ANSWER:

The Palaszczuk Government has committed up to $5 million over four years for medical research into vital treatment to improve the health and wellbeing of Queensland workers suffering from occupational dust lung disease and support over 300 workers suffering from the disease to remain in the workforce in alternative industries. This research is essential as there is currently limited information, data and robust research available on how we can best support and treat these workers.

This commitment builds on the extensive work that this Government has undertaken to support workers with dust lung diseases. This important work includes:

- Amendments to the workers' compensation laws in 2017 to provide access to an additional lump sum payment to workers with pneumoconiosis based on the severity of their disease and the ability to re-open a workers' compensation claim if a worker experiences disease progression.

- The establishment and commencement of the Queensland Health Notifiable Dust Lung Disease Register. This register which commenced on 1 July 2019 was the first of its kind in Australia.

- Developing one of Australia's first clinical pathway guidelines for workers with silicosis in the artificial stone benchtop industry to ensure consistent diagnosis and management of their injury.

- Collaborating with international coal workers pneumoconiosis expert, Dr Robert Cohen, and leading Queensland doctors, Dr Robert Edwards, Dr Matthew Brandt and Dr David Cleveland, to develop advice on how workers with mine dust lung diseases may be safely returned to work to provide certainty to industry and workers.

- Free lung disease examinations for eligible former and retired coal workers under the workers' compensation scheme through insurers until 2022.

- WorkCover funding a free health screening for all current and former workers in the stone benchtop fabrication industry. As at 31 October 2020, 1053 workers and former workers in the industry have undergone a free health assessment.

- WorkCover commissioning research from the University of Illinois (led by expert Dr Cohen) and Monash University to develop an evidence-based approach to return to work and vocational rehabilitation support for workers suffering from silicosis.

- Establishing the Mine Dust Health Support Service, as a shared initiative with the Office of Industrial Relations (OIR), Resources Safety and Health Queensland, and WorkCover Queensland (WorkCover), to support over 200 people with confidential access to counselling, and guidance regarding respiratory health screening, community supports and compensation entitlements.

<u>Silica dust in stone benchtop fabrication</u>

On 18 September 2018, I issued an urgent warning about the dangers of working with engineered stone and banned uncontrolled dry cutting and grinding of engineered stone. Workers were also encouraged to undergo urgent health screening through WorkCover.

Since this time the Stone Benchtop Code was introduced on 31 October 2019 and was Australia's first Code of Practice for the stone benchtop industry—a significant step forward in the Palaszczuk Government's efforts to eradicate silicosis in Queensland.

On 1 July 2020, the workplace exposure standard for respirable crystalline silica in Queensland was halved from the original level of 0.1 milligrams per cubic metre to 0.05 milligrams per cubic metre. This change mirrors that of the exposure standard set by Safe Work Australia.

OIR has engaged and continues to engage in compliance audits of the stone benchtop industry.

Phase 1 of the compliance audits targeted workplaces that fabricate engineered stone benchtops for residential or commercial use.

Phase 2 of the compliance campaign involved 138 audits of all known engineered stone benchtop workplaces across the State.

In Phases 1 and 2 a total of 148 audits were carried out which resulted in 598 statutory notices being issued including 19 issued fines with fines totalling $65,232.

The latest phase of the compliance campaign (involving re-auditing all known stone benchtop fabrication businesses in Queensland) commenced on 3 August 2020 and is scheduled for completion on 31 December 2020.

As part of this phase, OIR inspectors are visiting all engineered and natural stone benchtop fabrication workplaces currently operating in Queensland to assess compliance with the requirements of the Managing respirable crystalline silica dust exposure in the stone benchtop industry Code of Practice 2019 (the Stone Benchtop Code).

As at 24 November 2020, a total of 124 (75%) of a potential 166 audits have been completed. These audits have shown there has been a significant reduction in hazardous dry cutting and improved monitoring of workers' health. Audits so far have resulted in the issuing of 265 enforcement notices for a range of matters, including inadequate air monitoring, incorrect use of respiratory protective equipment, and inadequate workplace cleaning methods.

Follow-up visits will be undertaken through to May 2021 to monitor ongoing compliance with the Stone Benchtop Code.

Work has now commenced on the development of a code of practice for managing respirable crystalline silica dust exposure in the construction industry (the Queensland Silica in Construction Code), which I announced in Parliament on 18 September 2019.

Led by OIR, a steering committee of industry, employee, Work Health and Safety professional and technical representatives has been formed to guide the development of the Queensland Silica in Construction Code with three committee meetings conducted in late 2020.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 17

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

Can the Minister update the Committee on developments under the Government's labour hire licensing scheme and any plans to boost the Labour Hire Licensing Compliance Unit?

ANSWER:

The labour hire licensing scheme commenced on 16 April 2018 to protect workers from exploitation and promote the integrity of the labour hire industry in Queensland. The licensing scheme has been a great success, with 3297 businesses currently licensed to provide labour hire services.

On 20 October 2020, the Palaszczuk Government committed to invest an additional $6.1 million over four years to boost the Labour Hire Licensing Compliance Unit (LHLCU) and employ an additional eight staff. These inspectors will be focused on the building and construction, security, and contract cleaning industries, as well as regional Queensland.

Since the beginning of the scheme, the LHLCU has supported businesses doing the right thing by providing education and client services, and has taken strong compliance actions including refusals of applications, and cancellations and suspensions of licences.

In addition, there has been five successful prosecutions of labour hire providers who operated without a licence, with fines ranging from $50,000 to $120,000. Two company directors have been fined between $25,000 to $60,000 for their role in the offences committed. A user of labour hire has also been convicted and fined $50,000 for entering into an arrangement with an unlicensed provider.

The LHLCU has also forged strong links with other state and federal regulators, including WorkCover Queensland (WorkCover), the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Australian Taxation Office and the Department of Home Affairs to work jointly on matters of serious non-compliance. For example, LHLCU has worked closely with the Phoenix Taskforce, which brings 38 agencies together to combat illegal phoenix activity. That Taskforce is headed by the Australian Taxation Office.

The LHLCU has also collaborated with WorkCover to ensure labour hire providers have adequate workers' compensation policies in place to protect workers and worked with Workplace Health and Safety Queensland to improve safety outcomes in the poultry processing industry.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 18

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

Can the Minister advise on how the Government is responding to the scourge of wage theft?

ANSWER:

The Palaszczuk Government has taken action to address wage theft in Queensland. The reforms address the findings of the 2018 Queensland Parliament *Inquiry into wage theft in Queensland* (the inquiry into wage theft), which found the practice is endemic across the State. Other state and federal inquiries and investigations by regulators and the media continue to find widespread and serious cases of underpayment.

The inquiry into wage theft heard that almost 25% of Queensland workers are not being paid what they should be paid, and it takes $2.2 billion dollars out of Queensland workers' pockets each year in unpaid wages and superannuation.

There is still no excuse for wage theft. Workers need to be paid their full and lawful wages—a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

In July this year, the Queensland Government introduced a Bill to criminalise wage theft in Queensland. The Bill was passed and assented to in September and amends the *Criminal Code* offence of stealing to ensure that where an employer deliberately steals or commits fraud against their workers will be a crime. For many years, the *Criminal Code* has included specific criminal charges for employees stealing from their employers. The amendments to the stealing and fraud offences mean there is an equivalent offence and punishment for employers stealing from or committing fraud against their workers.

Employers who commit wage theft face up to 10 years' jail for stealing and 14 years for fraud under amendments to the *Criminal Code*, the same penalty that applies to workers.

To further support Queenslanders who are underpaid by their employer, a new streamlined small claims process was introduced in the same Bill and will commence from 1 March 2021.

This process will provide a simple and low-cost jurisdiction for workers trying to recover their entitlements, including conciliation by an experienced commissioner of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission prior to hearing, to try to resolve the matter.

Implementation is underway with new forms, guidance material and amended tribunal rules to be in place to provide for simple, quick, low-cost wage claim processes for Queensland workers.

The threat of tough criminal charges for deliberate wage theft, together with the new streamlined process for recovering underpayment, provides a strong incentive for employers in Queensland to do the right thing and pay workers their full legal entitlements.

The associated costs of the implementation of the new wage recovery process will be met within the existing budget and the new criminal offence for wage theft and the streamlined wages recovery process will be monitored to ensure these are operating effectively.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 19

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

Can the Minister outline the importance of the Country Racing Package and what it means to rural and regional communities throughout Queensland?

ANSWER:

The Palaszczuk Government and Racing Queensland (RQ) are committed to the Country Racing Program in recognition of the vital role racing plays in creating community and social cohesion right across Queensland.

The latest report on the Size and Scope of the Queensland Racing Industry found that racing's value-added contribution to the Queensland economy has grown to more than $1.6 billion a year and importantly, 46% of this economic contribution occurs in regional communities.

In recognition of the vital role racing plays in creating social cohesion across the State, the Palaszczuk Government has backed the Country Racing Program with a further two years until 2022–23 with funding of $35.2 million, on top of the original commitment of $70.4 million over four years. This is a total of $105.6 million to country racing and the people of regional Queensland.

This funding provides security and continuity to the country racing community up to 2023 by funding race meetings, prize money and racing infrastructure, repairs and maintenance at country racing clubs.

In response to the COVID-19 recovery, Racing Queensland also fast-tracked capital works at race clubs to create jobs. This includes $2.6 million in Country Racing Program infrastructure grants.

RQ has listened to clubs and, with the support of the Queensland Government, has improved the program's infrastructure delivery to allow clubs to apply to deliver their own projects and to allow clubs to aggregate funding from multiple sources to gain better value for money and scale-up projects.

In 2020–21, RQ has scheduled 19 TAB meetings to be converted from non-TAB clubs in regional Queensland, where participants will benefit from increased prize money and greater wagering returns. Importantly, the national and international broadcast of these meetings will showcase more of regional Queensland racing to Australia and the world.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2020 ESTIMATES PRE-HEARING

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 20

THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON GRACE GRACE MP)—

QUESTION:

Can the Minister update the Committee on the infrastructure works undertaken for racing throughout Queensland and how these facilities are improving animal welfare, community benefit and supporting jobs?

ANSWER:

This is a landmark year for infrastructure for Queensland racing with the Palaszczuk Government funding a number of key projects including $39 million for the Greater Brisbane Greyhound Centre near Ipswich, $2.4 million for the $7 million Sunshine Coast Turf Club Synthetic Track Replacement and $1.5 million for Townsville Turf Club's tie-up stalls. All of these projects are currently underway.

In addition to these projects commencing, the Gold Coast Turf Club Tracks and Lights Project has been given conditional funding approval of $31.5 million with Racing Queensland actively working with the Gold Coast Turf Club to make this project happen.

These infrastructure projects follow the successful development of the $24.8 million Ipswich Turf Club Racing Precinct, which was opened in September this year.

In addition to these industry-changing projects, Racing Queensland (RQ) is also progressing on securing a new site for a Metropolitan Harness Facility.

These projects are funded through the Queensland Government's Racing Infrastructure Fund. This fund has a focus on creating and sustaining jobs through the construction of world-class facilities and improvements in animal welfare.

A leading example of a project with animal welfare at the core of its design and construction is the Greater Brisbane Greyhound Centre, which will feature three tracks—a straight track, a two-turn track; and a much needed one-turn track—all designed and constructed using evidence-based, best-practice safety principles.

The continuation of funding of the Country Racing Program for a further two years—with funding of $35.2 million on top of the original commitment of $70.4 million over four years—provides security and continuity to the country racing community up to 2023, ensuring funding for prize money and racing costs, as well as racing infrastructure renewal, repairs and maintenance at country racing clubs.

In response to the COVID-19 recovery, RQ also fast-tracked capital works at race clubs to create jobs. This includes $2.6 million in Country Racing Program infrastructure grants and an additional $5 million to upgrade critical assets at race clubs.

Finally, the significance of the racing industry to Queensland is identified in the latest report on the Size and Scope of the Queensland Racing Industry, which found racing generated more than $1.6 billion a year in value-added contribution to the Queensland economy and supports more than 12,600 full-time equivalent jobs.