

WEDNESDAY, 30 JULY 2025

ESTIMATES—GOVERNANCE, ENERGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE— FINANCE, TRADE, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Jon Krause, Scenic Rim)

Committee Members

Mr MJ Crandon MP—Chair

Ms B Asif MP

Mr JT Barounis MP

Mr LR McCallum MP

Ms KJ Morton MP

Mr CG Whiting MP

Members in Attendance

Mr MC Berkman MP

Dr CAC Rowan MP

Hon. SM Fentiman MP

Hon. Grace Grace MP

Mr MPT Healy MP

In Attendance

Hon. RM Bates MP, Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training

Mr Michael Negerevich, Chief of Staff

Department of Trade, Employment and Training

Mr Peter McKay, Director-General

Trade and Investment Queensland

Mr Justin McGowan, Chief Executive Officer

Mr Matthew Rigby, Chief Operating Officer

Queensland Treasury

Mr Paul Williams, Under Treasurer (Office of the Under Treasurer)

Mr Drew Ellem, Strategic Policy

Department of Trade, Employment and Training

Ms Chantel Llorca, Deputy Director-General, Corporate Services

The committee met at 9.00 am.



Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the Governance, Energy and Finance Committee open.

I acknowledge the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people of this state and their elders past, present and emerging. I also acknowledge the former members of this parliament who

have participated in and nourished the democratic institutions of this state. Finally, I acknowledge the people of this state, whether they have been born here or have chosen to make this state their home, and whom we represent to make laws and conduct other business for the peace, welfare and good government of this state.

I am Jon Krause, the member for Scenic Rim and Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Under the provisions of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001, I will preside over today's hearing.

The members of the Governance, Energy and Finance committee are: Mr Michael Crandon, chair and member for Coomera; Mr Chris Whiting, deputy chair and member for Bancroft; Ms Bisma Asif, member for Sandgate; Mr John Barounis, member for Maryborough; Mr Lance McCallum, member for Bundamba; and Ms Kendall Morton, member for Caloundra. The committee is joined by other members who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions at the hearing today.

I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at the Deputy Speaker's discretion or by order of the committee. Please note that the first three rows of the gallery are reserved for departmental and ministerial staff supporting the minister. Members and others who are attending to observe are welcome to sit in the remaining rows or in the gallery.

The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcasters of proceedings are available from the secretariat. Staff who are assisting our witnesses here today are permitted to use personal electronic devices in the chamber. I ask all present, including members, to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode or turned off if not in use. I also remind everyone that food and drink is not permitted in this chamber.

The House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearing. Today the committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2025 for the portfolios of the Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the times specified for the area, as was agreed by the House. I refer members to the program set by the House, available throughout the chamber and on the committee's webpage.

The first session will examine the proposed expenditure of the finance portfolio area until 10 am and then the proposed expenditure of the trade portfolio area until 11 am. We will suspend proceedings for an intermission from 11 am until 11.15 am.

I remind everyone that these proceedings are subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. In respect of government owned corporations and statutory authorities, standing order 180(2) provides that a member may ask any question that the committee determines will assist it in its examination of the relevant appropriation bill or otherwise assist the committee to determine whether public funds are being efficiently spent or appropriate public guarantees are being provided.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the Under Treasurer, the director-general, officials and departmental officers, and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister, the Under Treasurer or the director-general. Please remember to press your microphones on before you start speaking and off when you are finished.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of finance, open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

Ms BATES: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and committee members for the opportunity to appear before you today in relation to the proposed expenditure for the finance portfolio for 2025-26.

The Crisafulli LNP government is laying the foundation for a fresh start through a focus on delivering stability and certainty for the essential services and infrastructure that Queenslanders need, with a disciplined and responsible approach to respecting taxpayers' money. In my role as Minister for Finance, I sit alongside the Premier, Deputy Premier and Treasurer on the Cabinet Budget Review Committee, working to ensure that spending proposals are efficient and effective at delivering policy outcomes.

I am also tasked with identifying whole-of-government savings opportunities and supporting ministers and agencies as they work to achieve savings within their own budgets. This is all while

ensuring frontline service delivery and employment security, just as we promised and delivered in the budget.

I am pleased to be part of the economic security team with the Treasurer and Minister for Women and Women's Economic Security. We are driving the Crisafulli LNP government's objectives to enhance economic participation and empower women and girls.

As the common shareholding minister for all 11 of Queensland's government owned corporations, I have worked with my fellow shareholding ministers to clearly reset expectations to focus on core business and operational performance, deliver responsible expenditure, and improve governance and transparency so our GOCs can deliver the best services and value for Queenslanders. This is particularly important for our energy generator businesses. The Crisafulli government's Electricity Maintenance Guarantee has been implemented to ensure state owned power plants operate safely to deliver affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for Queensland businesses and families.

In relation to the serious incident at Callide C3 on 4 April 2025, I echo the Treasurer's comments to the committee yesterday. I confirm that neither shareholding minister received text messages in relation to the incident from the CS Energy board prior to 8 April 2025. CS Energy's handling of the Callide C3 incident did not meet the government's or the public's expectations. The CS Energy board clearly acknowledged that briefings and statements by CS Energy to government understated the gravity of the Callide C3 incident. Once matters had been fully disclosed by CS Energy, this government took swift action to address them.

I am also working to ensure Queensland's compulsory third party insurance scheme remains affordable for motorists facing cost-of-living pressures and sustainable so that it continues to provide an important safety net for CTP claimants and National Injury Insurance Scheme Queensland participants with serious lifelong disabilities who have been injured in motor vehicle accidents through no fault of their own.

I am also pleased to be supported by the Office of Best Practice Regulation within the re-established Queensland Productivity Commission and the Queensland Competition Authority to work toward better regulatory practices and improved competition and pricing to support long-term cost-of-living relief for Queenslanders. Productivity is at the heart of the Crisafulli government's economic agenda. Productivity growth has largely been stagnant in Queensland over the last eight years, and I am pleased the Queensland Productivity Commission has commenced their first task to identify opportunities to improve the building and construction industry in Queensland.

The Crisafulli government is committed to driving productivity improvements and a stronger economy by leveraging private sector investment, delivering productive infrastructure and essential services, reducing costs for business, unlocking skills, training and innovation, and investing in Queensland's energy and water security. Under the Crisafulli government, Queensland is open for business. My ministerial colleagues, including the Treasurer, and I are providing regulatory and taxation certainty to position Queensland as a stable investment destination in the face of uncertain macro conditions.

Our vision for Queensland is to be a leading, advanced economy. We will achieve this through thoughtful and targeted investments in proven sectors that leverage our competitive advantages, such as resources, agriculture and tourism, and strategic industries that build sovereign capability. I am particularly proud of the role the Queensland Investment Corporation plays in shaping this, and I am looking forward to continuing our strong working relationship.

We are working together across government to identify efficiencies and opportunities to remove barriers to investment and deliver a streamlined and coordinated 'Team Queensland' approach here, interstate and overseas. This is in addition to investing in the critical infrastructure and essential services to ensure Queensland is a viable state to invest and do business, attracting the private and institutional capital needed to power our economy into the future.

Trust is important in business, and we have proven that the Crisafulli government does what it says it will do. As we look ahead, partnerships with the private sector are critical in building a state that is resilient and thriving. With our diversity of industry, workforce and geography, and a hugely exciting investment horizon with the Olympic and Paralympic Games, I truly believe Queensland is the best place in Australia to invest.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hardworking public servants and GOC employees across my finance portfolio and sincerely thank them for their significant efforts as we work together to deliver for Queenslanders.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. We will move to questions from the non-government side. Member for Bancroft or delegate?

Mr WHITING: I will go to the shadow treasurer, the member for Waterford.

Ms FENTIMAN: Minister, in respect of your duties as a shareholding minister, I seek leave to table RTI documents released to the opposition.

Ms ASIF: I will table those.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Sandgate, are you tabling some documents?

Ms ASIF: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: They need to be distributed to the committee members and across the table to the minister and their team, please.

Ms FENTIMAN: Minister, on page 134, a text message, 'Something has happened at Callide C again,' was received at 4.48 pm on Friday, 4 April 2025. Minister, was this text sent to you and who sent it?

Ms BATES: The Treasurer has provided a response to questions on the Callide C3 incident in questions on notice 4 and 11 and questions on the Electricity Maintenance Guarantee in question on notice 7.

Ms FENTIMAN: Point of order on relevance: this is a new text message that has not been revealed by the opposition to date. My question was very specific: was the text sent to you and who sent it?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is your point of order relevance, member for Waterford?

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order: the minister was responding to the question as asked and was barely into that response before a point of order was taken. I submit to you that the point of order with respect to relevance is not valid given the minister's timely response and the minister had just commenced responding to the question as asked.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, members both, for your points of order. Minister, I take the points of order and the comments on both aspects of it. You were just commencing your response. I would like you to continue your response.

Ms BATES: Under Labor's watch, Queenslanders were failed by a government that disregarded safety, governance and transparency. They ignored warning signs, cut funding and let critical systems fall into disrepair.

Ms FENTIMAN: Point of order—I am sorry to interrupt you, Minister.

Ms BATES: Safety and risk management were sidelined.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please pause, Minister.

Ms FENTIMAN: On relevance, I am not sure what Labor has to do with who sent the text message and who the text message was received by.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order: the member for Waterford has asked the question. It is not an opportunity to add commentary to that. The minister was barely into her response, once again. I submit to you that she be allowed to respond but that you also consider the additional commentary from the member for Waterford to be out of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Moggill. I will monitor proceedings myself, but thank you for your assistance. Minister, you have the call. The question has been asked. Member for Waterford, if the minister is able to complete her answer, that would assist, I am sure, in seeing that there is relevance in the answer.

Ms BATES: Obviously this RTI has been sent to the opposition, and I believe it is under review by the Privacy Commissioner.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Waterford or other non-government member, do you have a further question?

Ms FENTIMAN: Just so I am clear, Minister, you are refusing to state who received that text message and who it was from? Don't you think the people of Queensland have a right to know?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There were actually two questions there. In accordance with standing orders, member for Waterford, I ask that you ask one question at a time.

Ms FENTIMAN: Minister, don't you think the people of Queensland have a right to know who that text message was received by and who sent it?

Mr CRANDON: Point of order: the minister has just clearly outlined that this document is under review at the moment. I think she has been quite clear in making that statement.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Mr CRANDON: The point of order I am making is that the minister is now being badgered in relation to something that she is unable to provide further answers to.

Dr ROWAN: On a further point of order, Deputy Speaker: despite you giving direction about the question being rephrased, there were still two parts to the question as asked when it was rephrased.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Moggill, for your point of order. As I understood it, the question was—

Ms FENTIMAN: Don't you think Queenslanders have a right to know? Deputy Speaker, if I might respond—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You may respond to that point of order. It is within your rights.

Ms FENTIMAN: It is immaterial that documents may be under review. The fact is that the documents have been released under RTI and now tabled. They are public documents.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes.

Ms FENTIMAN: The minister has to respond. It is immaterial whether they are under review.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: They are tabled documents of the committee. Member for Waterford, you are quite correct. Your question was?

Ms FENTIMAN: Don't Queenslanders have a right to know?

Ms BATES: The text was sent by a member of the public. Texts prove that the incident was public and it was freely available on the app, which the shadow minister might need to get on her phone.

CS Energy's handling of the Callide C3 incident on 4 April 2025 did not meet the Crisafulli government's expectations; nor did it meet the public's expectations. The board acknowledged that briefings and statements understated the gravity of the incident. The board has acknowledged governance issues and rightly expressed its determination to fix problems.

We expect timely and transparent reporting. While we cannot excuse the handling of that incident, I take some comfort in the decisive action that the Crisafulli government took once the seriousness of that event was more adequately disclosed. The Crisafulli government created an obligation on all GOCs to disclose outages in real time under a new communications protocol for unplanned outages of electricity generation units. Protocols like this did not exist under the former Labor government.

Additionally, the Electricity Maintenance Guarantee sets out performance requirements for maintenance investment, personal safety, process safety and plant performance. Under the Crisafulli government, performance payments should not be paid where there are performance issues or the business has not met the requirements. It does give me an opportunity to talk about a previous explosion at C4 under the Labor government.

Ms FENTIMAN: Point of order on relevance: I think it is time for the next question. The minister has answered that question. This is now irrelevant.

Ms BATES: I am giving a very fulsome response.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Waterford, you have full right to make a point of order, but I would ask that before you commence it I pause the minister and give you the call. I take your point of order on relevance. Minister, do you have further matters that are relevant to the question?

Ms BATES: I do, yes. I wanted to remind those opposite of how they handled similar incidents in the past. I will give some background as a refresher for those opposite. On 25 May 2021 a catastrophic explosion at the Callide C4 unit destabilised the electricity grid and caused 470,000 Queenslanders to lose power. The 2021 explosion was the most significant threat to Queensland's electricity grid in the last 10 years. The unit was originally meant to return to service in May 2023. That was then delayed until early 2024 and subsequently until August 2024, when the unit returned to service after 1,200 days.

Queenslanders were subjected to 1,200 days of cover-up and deception from the former Labor government regarding the explosion, its cause, its severity and what, if anything, was being done to maintenance and safety processes at Callide C. As it turns out, nothing was being done. In the five years prior to the 2021 explosion the former government ripped out over \$500 million in dividends from—

Ms ASIF: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: relevance. The minister is now talking about five years prior. That has nothing to do with the question the member asked or the budget at hand.

Mr BAROUNIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your point of order on relevance, member for Sandgate. Member for Maryborough, do you want to contribute to that?

Mr BAROUNIS: Yes. The minister is replying to the question, and I would really appreciate it if the member for Sandgate would allow the minister to complete her answer.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Maryborough. Member for Sandgate, I have listened to the minister carefully. The question included a reference to the public's right to know. As I am listening to the minister, her statements are relevant to that aspect of the question.

Ms BATES: We know that Dr Sean Brady was appointed to conduct a review of the incident. His report cost \$10 million. Then the former Labor government spent \$38 million in legal fees trying to keep the report secret. The saga ended up with the former minister, the member for Springwood, in court. Eventually, when the Brady report was fully released in July 2024 it painted a picture of poor maintenance and safety processes. It laid bare the consequences of 10 years of neglect under Labor. Following the explosion, the loss of supply caused Queenslanders' power bills to increase by 19.9 per cent in just 12 months, the highest in the country and three times the national average. It is these failures—

Mr WHITING: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: relevance under standing order 118. This really has nothing to do with the examination of this budget and the question. I do not usually pull up on relevance, but this is getting way off track.

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: I would submit to you that under standing order 118 the minister is being responsive not only to the question as asked but, given the documents that have been tabled as well, there is a broad context in relation to the matters being canvassed, particularly given what has been tabled this morning. I would submit to you that the minister should be allowed to continue with the contextual response she is providing.

Mr WHITING: You are really pushing it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please, members. Minister, I have ruled previously that, in relation to the aspect of the right to know, you have been relevant. I do get the sense that you are about to wrap up. Please ensure that you continue to be relevant to that aspect of the question.

Ms BATES: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It was those failures that are the motivation behind our government's \$1.6 billion Electricity Maintenance Guarantee, which is putting downward pressure on electricity prices by properly maintaining our state-owned power plants and improving the reliability of our base load power. I refer all of the members opposite to my opening statement this morning.

Ms FENTIMAN: Minister, there was a text message released under RTI from 'Rebecca' to a 'Michael' regarding the Callide unit C3 incident. The message is dated Friday, 4 April at 6.53 pm and 8.22 pm. It is at page 141. It is assumed that 'Michael' is your chief of staff, who is sitting next to you. Minister, I ask again: what did you do with the information you received via text message? Did 'Michael' inform you of these messages, and what did you do next?

Mr CRANDON: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: the repetitious nature of the questions. Can we move on to another subject? It has been well and truly covered in previous questions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Coomera, I do not think that is a point of order. This is a new question. Thank you for your point of order. Member for Waterford, thank you for your question.

Ms BATES: Again I refer the member for Waterford to my opening statement and the contributions of the Minister for Energy yesterday. Yesterday was the day to ask these questions.

Ms FENTIMAN: Minister, with respect, you are a shareholding minister. These documents were released by your office under RTI. We are asking questions about what you did with that information. It is a legitimate question and Queenslanders deserve to know the answer. What did you do with that information?

Ms BATES: I was advised there was an incident. The magnitude of the incident was not made clear, and I have mentioned that in my opening statement.

Ms FENTIMAN: Minister, on page 133 of the RTI documents there is a text message which appears to be sent to you dated Monday, 7 April at 3.19 pm. It says, 'Hi, Ros—hope things are good for you.' Then it is blanked out due to 'contrary to public interest'. Then it says, 'but if you need anything more from me I'm happy to catch up.' Minister, the redacted information is apparently contrary to the public interest. Again, don't Queenslanders have a right to know? Will you tell us what was in that text message?

Ms BATES: The RTI has been provided to the opposition. I believe they are going to the Privacy Commissioner to get more information, but again I echo the sentiments of the Treasurer and Minister for Energy yesterday. That text message had nothing to do with the explosion, which we subsequently found out was much worse than we thought.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We are going to government members' questions now.

Mr CRANDON: Good morning, Minister. Good morning, Under Treasurer; my first question is to you. Under Treasurer, under the Administrative Arrangements Order, Queensland Treasury now reports to both the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance. How are you and Treasury supporting the work of the finance minister in her responsibilities?

Mr Williams: As you have noted, the Minister for Finance's responsibilities are outlined in Administrative Arrangements Order (No. 3) 2024. The principal ministerial responsibilities for the Minister for Finance are: government owned enterprises, insurance, the Nominal Defendant and regulatory reform. The Minister for Finance is responsible for the administration of several acts: the Government Owned Corporations Act 1993; the Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994; the Mutual Recognition (Queensland) Act 1992; the National Injury Insurance Scheme (Queensland) Act 2016; the Occupational Licensing National Law (Queensland) Act 2010; the Queensland Competition Authority Act 1997; and the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (Queensland) Act 2003.

The administrative orders provide clear delineation between the roles of the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance. The Minister for Finance is also a member of the Cabinet Budget Review Committee, as mentioned in the opening statement, and is therefore directly involved in decision-making on all matters with financial or budgetary implications for the government. As a member of CBRC, the minister has played a key role in the development of the 2024-25 midyear review as well as the 2025-26 state budget. The minister has also been involved in decisions on negotiating positions and outcomes on significant industrial relations issues, intergovernmental agreements and major commercial matters involving the state.

The minister's charter letter outlines three finance related commitments: work with fellow shareholding ministers to enhance the performance of Queensland's government owned corporations to deliver the best services and value for Queenslanders; work with ministerial colleagues to drive investment opportunities in Queensland; and consider the material and finalise the 2023 review of the CTP scheme. All of these commitments are on track for delivery within agreed timeframes. As you mentioned, the Under Treasurer and Queensland Treasury report to and support both the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance in accordance with their respective responsibilities under the Administrative Arrangements Order. Senior Treasury officers meet regularly with Minister Bates and her ministerial staff on matters concerning the minister's portfolio responsibilities and provide advice and briefing material to assist the minister on cabinet and cabinet committee matters relating to her finance portfolio responsibilities.

Queensland Treasury has been undergoing an organisational realignment which will come into effect on 1 August. The realignment reflects changes to Treasury's scope and responsibilities following the machinery-of-government changes, the new priorities of the government and the need to support two ministers. On the specific issue of supporting the work of the finance minister, the Queensland Treasury realignment will allow Treasury to better support the minister through a dedicated Deputy Under Treasurer—Finance and Investment role. This will bring together the functions within Treasury that align with the administrative responsibilities of the minister, including the Queensland Government Insurance Fund, the insurance commission, investment, the GOC oversight and financial efficiency.

Mr CRANDON: Minister, can you please outline your key roles as finance minister and how this work complements that of the Treasurer and other ministers?

Ms BATES: As finance minister, my responsibilities include coverage of Queensland's government owned enterprises, insurance and investment facilitation. Promoting accountability and

respect for taxpayers' money and fostering investment opportunities for Queensland are core parts of my role. Within the finance portfolio, I lead three related government commitments: first, to work with fellow shareholding ministers to enhance the performance of Queensland's government owned corporations to deliver the best service and value for Queenslanders; second, to work with ministerial colleagues to drive investment opportunities in Queensland; and, third, to consider the material and finalise the 2023 review of the comprehensive third-party insurance scheme which was left incomplete by the former Labor government. The government and the CTP scheme regulator, the Motor Accident Insurance Commission, have been productively engaging with industry to discuss the operation of Queensland's CTP scheme and opportunities for improvement.

As outlined in the Government Owned Corporations Act 1993, it establishes the legislative and governance framework for Queensland government owned corporations. As outlined in the act, boards are accountable for a corporation's performance and required to keep shareholding ministers reasonably informed of operations, financial performance and financial positions of the business. I am the common shareholding minister across all government owned corporations, but it is important to distinguish that the portfolio ministers have greater involvement given their responsibility to administer legislation pertaining to operations within a particular sector—for example, energy or water. Our responsibility as shareholders is to set strategic expectations without compromising the responsibility and accountability of the boards.

Enhancing the performance of Queensland government owned corporations and restoring respect for taxpayers' money is important work and complements the work of the Treasurer as he drives budgetary repair for the state and delivers the Energy Roadmap. To demonstrate how my responsibilities complement the Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Minister for Home Ownership, I am pleased to report that the Crisafulli government has implemented the Electricity Maintenance Guarantee to ensure that government owned power plants operate to safely deliver affordable, reliable and sustainable energy to Queenslanders. The Electricity Maintenance Guarantee provides full transparency on maintenance requests to shareholding ministers—myself and the Treasurer—to drive improved asset performance and ensure accountability of boards to both the government and the Queenslanders they serve.

Driving investment opportunities in Queensland is also complementary to work of my ministerial colleagues—for example, the Deputy Premier's portfolio of state development, infrastructure and planning and the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Minister for Manufacturing and Minister for Regional and Rural Development, both of whom have also led trade missions overseas. The Crisafulli government is committed to providing stability and certainty to drive growth and private investment in Queensland, and I am actively working with my ministerial colleagues to drive investment opportunities, ensuring investment prospects across our priority sectors are presented during my overseas trade missions and interstate engagements. The Treasurer and I work closely together to build strong investor confidence by fostering a business and regulatory environment built on stability and certainty. This is of course after the former government squandered royalty revenue windfalls on speculative investments like hydrogen and damaged critical relationships in our vital resources sector.

Queensland Treasury provides an open door to investors from interstate and overseas, and Treasury's investment division offers services like investment facilitation for highly complex projects to benefit from an elevated and coordinated government response. This coordination also includes targeted programs delivered by Queensland Investment Corporation and collaboration with other agencies and key stakeholders.

Part of my role as finance minister is to identify whole-of-government opportunities to support ministers and their portfolio agencies in achieving savings. This whole-of-government savings program is an ongoing activity of identifying and implementing productivity improvements and efficiencies across agencies and associated entities in a calm and methodical way without disrupting frontline service delivery.

The road to fiscal repair is long and challenging after a decade of the former government, but this budget has proven that the Crisafulli government has its priorities right—investing in critical infrastructure and service delivery—and is restoring respect for taxpayers' money.

Ms MORTON: Minister, I refer to your role as the GOC minister for Queensland's 11 government owned corporations. Would you advise the committee of steps you have undertaken to improve governance, performance and culture within Queensland's government owned corporations?

Ms BATES: Together with other shareholding ministers, I have taken several steps to improve governance, performance and culture. Firstly, we have reset strategic expectations for each entity and

communicated these expectations very clearly to the boards. Our expectations focus on reliability, efficiency and safety of our existing assets and on prudence and efficiency in spending. Asset investment decisions are made by boards, with an obligation to notify or seek approval from shareholding ministers for proposed investments above specific thresholds. To support accountability and reporting to shareholders, each GOC must have a corporate plan and a statement of corporate intent for each financial year agreed with shareholding ministers.

Statements of corporate intent and corporate plans for energy government owned corporations have been updated to reflect new shareholding minister expectations and the Electricity Maintenance Guarantee implemented by the Crisafulli government. The Electricity Maintenance Guarantee has been implemented to ensure state owned power plants operate to deliver affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for Queenslanders. The guarantee provides full transparency on maintenance requests to shareholding ministers, while driving asset performance and ensuring GOC boards are held accountable to Queenslanders.

On 28 November 2024, shareholding ministers wrote to Stanwell, CS Energy and CleanCo, implementing the guarantee and conveying shareholder expectations for each business to focus on financial and operational performance of existing generation assets, to maximise value from existing generation assets, apply clear investment parameters to existing renewable energy and storage projects, and deliver renewable energy and storage projects on time and on budget.

At the time, the five-year investment on maintenance of generation assets was estimated to be \$1.4 billion over five years. In the Crisafulli government's 2025-26 budget, this investment has increased to \$1.6 billion over five years to maintain our existing state owned power plants for longer. Investments are intended to drive asset performance for affordable and reliable energy for Queensland businesses and families. By increasing the amount of generation in the market, the guarantee helps to put downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices which, over time, flow through to customers and ease energy costs.

We have taken clear steps to enhance transparency and accountability of government owned corporations by issuing communications protocols requiring government and the public to be appropriately informed of major incidents. I led this initiative as finance minister and I am pleased that, as a government, we are working so quickly to turn around a culture within our GOCs and empower our boards to return their businesses to being accountable, transparent and high-performing. Furthermore, Queenslanders expect government businesses to deliver safe, secure and reliable infrastructure and services, and cyber security is critical to this outcome. As a government, we have made our expectations clear that business must continue to build and invest in cyber security, maturity and resilience.

All entities are expected to meet relevant legislative requirements, sector benchmarks, best-practice approaches and continually evaluate whether any further action is required. They are also expected to have a senior executive with formal responsibility for cyber security to provide leadership and a clear line of accountability. They are also asked to build and invest in cyber security capabilities and processes and engage with Treasury and the government's cyber security unit to utilise centrally funded services and report incidents, and keep shareholding and responsible ministers and departments readily informed of key cyber security matters and incidences as appropriate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will move to non-government questions.

Ms FENTIMAN: Minister, given you have admitted to this committee that a text message was received by your office from Rebecca to Michael, did your chief of staff make a follow-up phone call as was offered in the text message to ask how severe this incident was? I note you can ask your chief of staff sitting next to you if you need to.

Mr BAROUNIS: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I think we have dealt with this question and we are looking forward to hearing from the minister rather than keep going back to repeat the same question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Maryborough, for your point of order. I consider the minister can answer the question.

Ms BATES: Again, I draw the attention of the member for Waterford to my opening statement in relation to the incident at Callide C3 on 4 April 2025. I again echo the Treasurer's comments in the committee yesterday and I confirm that neither shareholding minister received text messages in relation to the incident from the CS Energy board prior to 8 April 2025. As I said before, CS Energy's handling of the Callide C3 incident did not meet the government's or the public's expectations. The CS Energy

board clearly acknowledged that briefings and statements by CS Energy to government understated the gravity of the Callide C3 incident, and once matters had been fully disclosed by CS Energy, this government took swift action to address it.

Ms FENTIMAN: I will move on. Minister, I understand you have—

Mr CRANDON: Thank goodness.

Mr BAROUNIS: Finally!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order on my right. We do not need that commentary.

Ms FENTIMAN: Minister, I understand you have played a central role in negotiations with Chow Tai Fook and Far East Consortium for the Destination Brisbane Consortium. Minister, does your Assistant Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training, Amanda Stoker, provide you with any support in these negotiations?

Ms BATES: Obviously the negotiations in relation to Queen's Wharf and any meetings with Chow Tai Fook Enterprises and Far East Consortium are in cabinet-in-confidence, but in my ministerial role, I meet with a wide range of stakeholders, particularly international parties who are keen to invest or expand their investments into Queensland. If I did not meet with enough investors, I am sure that would itself be a point of criticism.

The Crisafulli LNP government is focused on the thousands of employees who work at the Stars venues in Brisbane and the Gold Coast and the ongoing construction and operation of the Queen's Wharf in Brisbane, and further questions on the Queen's Wharf Brisbane fall within the portfolio responsibilities of the Attorney-General and the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Integrity.

Ms FENTIMAN: Minister, are you aware that in April this year, Assistant Minister Stoker's husband was appointed company secretary of companies for the joint venture involving Chow Tai Fook and Far East Consortium? I seek leave to table relevant documents.

Ms ASIF: I will table them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Tabled by the member for Sandgate. Can we have them circulated, please? Before I give you the call, minister, could you just pause for a moment, please? I just want to seek some advice. Member for Waterford, can I ask you to clarify how this question is relevant to the minister's portfolio areas?

Ms FENTIMAN: Absolutely, Deputy Speaker. Obviously the negotiations involving the Destination Brisbane Consortium are very relevant to the budget, and the minister has already referenced what an important role the assistant minister plays to help her do her duties. Those negotiations, if successful, of course, will have a direct impact on the budget. It is really important that Queensland and this committee knows whether the minister was aware of this huge conflict of interest with her assistant minister. Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Ms BATES: I can advise the committee that Assistant Minister Stoker has had no contact with any of those entities on this issue, and I am also aware that she has a conflict management plan in place and has no contact.

Ms FENTIMAN: Thank you, Minister, but my question was were you aware?

Ms BATES: I have answered that.

Ms FENTIMAN: Sorry, Deputy Speaker, maybe I missed it. I did not hear the minister answer whether she was aware of the conflict of interest.

Mr CRANDON: Point of order, Deputy Speaker.

Mr BAROUNIS: Point of order, Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Who should I take first? Member for Coomera.

Mr CRANDON: The minister has made it clear that there is no conflict of interest, that the assistant minister—

Ms FENTIMAN: Actually, no, I am sorry, that is not correct.

Mr CRANDON:— has a plan in place and the—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Mr CRANDON: The point of order is that the member has just made a statement that is not correct in her further comments.

Mr WHITING: Point of order, Deputy Speaker. That is not point of order. It is commentary.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a bit of that going on from all sides, member for Bancroft. I am going to say there is no point of order on any front.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Deputy Speaker. Under standing order 112, there is to be no debate or opinion or other commentary offered when asking questions as part of the estimates process, and I would submit to you that there is commentary occurring with respect to the question as asked—

Ms FENTIMAN: I am so sorry, Deputy Speaker—

Dr ROWAN: Point of order again, Deputy Speaker. I am making a point of order and again I would submit to you now that the member for Waterford is interrupting me when I am making my point of order. So, before I continue that, can I get some guidance on the member for Waterford?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Waterford, please, when other people are speaking and they have the call, allow them to complete their points of order, as I often ask for your points of order. Member for Moggill, thank you for your point of order in relation to arguments, imputations and inferences in questions. I would caution all members in making their questions not to include arguments, inferences or imputations. There has been some of that. No points of order have been taken at that point, so I have not needed to rule on that.

Member for Waterford, to go back to your question and I think there was a statement that the question was not answered, the minister did respond to your question. Her response was relevant. It may not be the answer that you are seeking or the type of answer you are seeking, but the minister has answered that question, as she has deemed fit.

Ms FENTIMAN: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I am entitled to ask for clarifying statements. I did not understand the minister's answer; it is not that I am trying to debate the answer. I am seeking to know whether the minister was aware. I have not heard her say that. I am seeking to clarify, which I am entitled to do.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think that is the question, Minister.

Ms BATES: Again I reiterate: Assistant Minister Stoker has had no contact with Chow Tai Fook Enterprises and the Far East Consortium. I also note that her diaries are published monthly, as is required for all assistant ministers. Those records show that in her first three months Assistant Minister Stoker had more diaries entries than either former assistant ministers Howard or Saunders in their final three months. In fact, former assistant minister Howard—also the member for Ipswich—did not record a single portfolio related meeting in October prior to the caretaker period. I again reiterate that the assistant minister—

Ms FENTIMAN: Point of order, Deputy Speaker. I think you know where this is headed.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, please pause. Member for Waterford, what is your point of order?

Ms FENTIMAN: Relevance. I simply want the minister to clarify: was she aware of the conflict of interest? I do not think it can be more simple—yes or no?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, you were clarifying that. I would ask you to remain relevant to clarifying that issue in your response, please.

Ms BATES: Again, a conflict management plan is in place and Assistant Minister Stoker has had no contact. Again, I refer the member for Waterford to the assistant minister's diary. Again, further questions on Queen's Wharf Brisbane fall within the portfolio responsibilities of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity.

Ms FENTIMAN: We still have not had an answer so I am not quite sure where to go, despite me asking—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Waterford, do you have a question?

Ms FENTIMAN:—for a clarifying statement. Minister, I am going to assume you were not aware of this conflict of interest, given you will not answer my question.

Mr CRANDON: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will go there first, member for Coomera, but is your point of order about arguments?

Mr CRANDON: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Waterford, could you just please ask a question?

Ms FENTIMAN: Minister, how did you not know about this conflict of interest—particularly since you were leading government negotiations with Chow Tai Fook and Far East Consortium? You are a key minister in this government. You have previously had integrity issues of your own. How could you not know about this huge conflict of interest?

Mr CRANDON: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Coomera, what is your point of order?

Mr CRANDON: If the minister did not know or was not aware, how could she have answered the question and outlined the fact that the assistant minister has—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Mr CRANDON: The point of order is that the inferences being made by the member should not be taken.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Waterford, I also consider there was an inference or an imputation in that question. Could you please rephrase your question without inferences, imputations or arguments?

Ms FENTIMAN: Under Treasurer, can you guarantee that Assistant Minister Stoker has not had any briefings from your staff or any conversations with your staff about this project?

Mr Williams: Could you repeat the question? I am sorry.

Ms FENTIMAN: Has the assistant minister had any conversations with your staff about the Destination Brisbane Consortium or the negotiations that are underway?

Mr Williams: No.

Ms FENTIMAN: Thank you. I come back to Callide. I again seek leave to table some photos. I think the member for Sandgate will table them.

Ms ASIF: I table them.

Ms FENTIMAN: These are the photos of the Callide C3 explosion that happened earlier this year under the Crisafulli LNP government's watch.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: May I please ask you to pause there, member, while we circulate the tabled document.

Ms FENTIMAN: As a shareholding minister and someone who has clearly had communications with CS Energy directly about this matter—or at least your office—when did you first see photos of the aftermath of the explosion on 4 April?

Ms BATES: Again I point the member to the Treasurer's response provided yesterday and his response on the Callide C3 incident in questions on notice Nos 4 and 11. As I said, under Labor's watch Queenslanders were failed by a government that disregarded safety, governance and transparency. They ignored the warning signs, they cut funding and they let critical systems fall into disrepair. Safety and risk management were sidelined. As I have mentioned—

Ms FENTIMAN: Point of order, Deputy Speaker. We have minutes left. This is not relevant and the minister has not answered the question. When did she first see the photos?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, the minister was being responsive to your question and still had some words to say. I would ask the minister to continue being relevant to the question.

Ms BATES: Again, CS Energy's handling of the Callide C3 incident did not meet the Crisafulli government's expectations; nor did it meet the public's expectations. These issues have been discussed in the media. I believe the *Australian* had photos of it, so it was widely known.

Ms FENTIMAN: Thank you, Minister.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, we will proceed to government questions.

Mr BAROUNIS: Under Treasurer, can you please outline the insurance matters that Queensland Treasury is responsible for and the relevant agencies that assist in that work?

Mr Williams: Queensland Treasury, through the Motor Accident Insurance Commission, is responsible for Queensland's compulsory third party insurance scheme and the Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994. The scheme is underwritten by private insurers, with insurance premiums collected from motorists as part of the motor vehicle registration process. The Motor Accident Insurance Commission is staffed by Queensland Treasury employees who are funded by the motor accident insurance statutory insurance scheme levy. Queensland Treasury is also responsible for the National

Injury Insurance Scheme, which commenced in 2016 and provides lifetime treatment, care and support benefits to eligible people who are seriously injured in road crashes on Queensland roads. The scheme is funded by levies collected from motorists as part of their motor vehicle registrations. National Injury Insurance Scheme personnel are employed by the agency as a separate employing entity.

Queensland Treasury operates the Queensland Government Insurance Fund, which is a self-insurance fund for government property and liability insurance. There is no applicable legislation, with the Queensland Government Insurance Fund funded through premiums collected from the agencies it insures. The team are part of Queensland Treasury and provide underwriting and claims management services. MAIC, collaborates with lead agencies—the Department of Transport and Main Roads, Queensland Police Service and Queensland Health—on road safety and trauma initiatives to help reduce the incidence and effects of road trauma. QGIF collaborates with agencies, where required, to help them explore ways and opportunities to reduce their insurable risk exposures.

Mr BAROUNIS: Minister, with respect to compulsory third party insurance for motor vehicles, how is the Crisafulli government working to ensure Queensland's CTP insurance scheme remains affordable and sustainable?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the minister; however, I advise that this session finishes at 10 am. Limit your answer to that timeframe, please.

Ms BATES: The Crisafulli LNP government is committed to ensuring Queensland's compulsory third-party insurance scheme remains affordable for motorists facing cost-of-living pressures and sustainable so that it continues to provide an important safety net with fair compensation and timely treatment and care for people injured in motor vehicle accidents through no fault of their own. Queenslanders driving class 1 cars and station wagons pay the lowest CTP insurance premium in mainland Australia. I alongside the Treasurer took our responsibility in determining the CTP levies for 2025-26 calmly and seriously following advice from the Insurance Commissioner. Being conscious of cost-of-living pressures and also acknowledging the important balance of supporting the operation and ongoing financial sustainability of Queensland's CTP schemes, the net increase in levies from 1 July 2025 for class 1 and class 6 vehicles has been a modest \$10.20 per annum. Of this increase, 99.5 per cent directly contributes funding to support the crucial work of our first responders and frontline emergency health services and the delivery of lifetime treatment, care and support for those seriously injured in motor vehicle accidents.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. We have now reached the end of the time allocated for the consideration of the finance portfolio area. The committee will now examine the trade portfolio area until 11 am. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I will pause for a few moments while personnel change over at the front table and also the committee table.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will resume proceedings now and examine the estimates for the area of trade. I acknowledge the participation of the member for McConnel in this session of the proceedings. Minister, if you would like to make a short opening statement, you are welcome to do so. Then we will proceed to non-government members' questions.

Ms BATES: Thank you for the opportunity to update the committee on the trade component of my portfolio. Queensland is a trading state. Our economy relies on trade and investment. In the 2024 calendar year Queensland's exports of goods and services were valued at \$128.8 billion, accounting for over one-quarter of the gross state product. Trade and investment are fundamental to Queensland's economic health, prosperity and resilience. To help facilitate this contribution, the Crisafulli LNP government is delivering regulatory and taxation certainty to position Queensland as a stable trade and investment destination in the face of uncertain global conditions. Under our government Queensland is open for business and the world is listening.

In the past financial year Trade & Investment Queensland has directly supported over 1,600 exporters, and that is not just statistics; that is jobs, families and communities. Of the trade outcomes achieved in 2024-25, over 70 per cent have been delivered since November thanks to our government. To help achieve more, we are backing TIQ with an additional \$5 million this financial year—part of an additional \$18 million over the next four years—to help Queensland businesses expand into new international markets, grow trade and investment, attract global talent and international students to Queensland, and act as a trusted adviser to business.

Queensland and our local exporters are supported every step of the way by TIQ. They are small but they are mighty. With our government's support, they are delivering more for Queenslanders. We are refocusing their efforts where it matters most. We are supporting Queensland exporters, particularly small and medium enterprises, to break into new markets and increase local job opportunities as well as helping Queensland exporters to stay competitive in a volatile global market. This dedicated support is crucial now more than ever. It is no secret that global trade conditions are volatile at present. Shifting policies of international markets are creating uncertainty both abroad and here at home. We know that our exporters are looking for our government and Trade and Investment Queensland to help them navigate this turbulent time and we are delivering.

Through TIQ we have set up tariff response units, rolled out practical resources, delivered webinars through Trade and Investment Queensland's global network and held targeted forums across Queensland to understand impacts and provide advice. The online tariff hub has supported thousands of inquiries and the feedback from businesses has been overwhelmingly positive, and I have taken all of it to Canberra. At every step I have advocated directly to the federal government. Whether it be on trade, the importance of bringing the Quad here to Brisbane, the impact of tariffs or international education, we are making the case for and on behalf of every Queensland exporter. Our government recognises that international relationships are essential to Queensland's success. They are not optional. International engagement is vital to our future and it delivers outcomes which I am pleased to say cost less under this government.

As trade minister, I am leading an ambitious international engagement program targeted to some of Queensland's biggest trading partners including China, Japan, South Korea, India, Taiwan and Singapore. Since November 2024 I have undertaken four missions to rebuild and strengthen international relationships and increase opportunities for Queensland businesses with my ministerial colleagues undertaking missions also. The last mission I undertook was to Taiwan and Japan just two weeks ago with meetings and engagements focussed on international education and training, research and innovation—our largest services export sector.

Supported through the additional funding in the Crisafulli LNP government's first budget, we are delivering a series of market strategies to drive opportunities for Queensland businesses which will leverage off and support our international engagement. The first strategy, the Queensland-China Trade and Investment Strategy, was released in May 2025 ahead of my mission to greater China. Our second with a focus on the Japan market was on 9 July 2025 prior to my recent mission to Taiwan and Japan.

I am also working with my ministerial colleagues to drive investment opportunities. Our government is bringing investment into Queensland to support the state's diversified energy base, infrastructure and the minerals technology, food, agriculture and health industries. Under our government, Queensland is open for business and we are sharing this message far and wide. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I look forward to speaking more to these matters and answering the committee's questions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will go to non-government questions. I ask new officers at the table to please state your name for Hansard the first time you turn your microphone on to speak. I turn to the member for Bancroft or delegate.

Mr WHITING: We will go to the shadow minister for trade, the member for McConnel.

Ms GRACE: This question is for TIQ CEO, Mr McGowan. In reference to page 14 of the SDS can you advise the committee of any advice and/or briefing provided to the minister about the TIQ 2023-24 annual report—I believe it was tabled on 25 September 2024—and the achievements within? For example, in relation to our global investment attraction, there were 43 outcomes valued at \$1.66 billion, and our international operations, 437 export outcomes valued at \$907 billion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member. Just to be clear, that is last year's annual report tabled September last year?

Ms GRACE: Yes.

Mr McGowan: As part of the incoming government briefing process, we forwarded copies of key material like the annual report for the year, which included those achievements.

Ms GRACE: Director-General, can you advise the committee of any advice or briefing from your department that you gave to the minister—for example, on the Queensland Trade and Investment Strategy 2022-2032, the trade and investment strategic plan 2024-2028, the Queensland-India Trade and Investment Strategy 2023-2027 and the Queensland Pacific Trade Strategy?

Mr McKay: Other than the comments that the chief executive has made, in the initial briefings for the minister—Trade and Investment Queensland and the Department of Trade, Employment and Training were present—a number of those documents that you have mentioned were provided. Other than that, no other advice has been given by the department.

Ms GRACE: Can I just clarify, please: so just the documents were given? You did not speak to those strategies and their success?

Dr ROWAN: There is an imputation—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, if you could just ask the question without putting an inference on the nature of the document. Just ask the question, please. Director-General, you have the call.

Mr McKay: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. No, there was no discussion from the department about those documents.

Ms GRACE: Mr McGowan, could you advise if any of these strategies have been significantly changed or revoked since 1 November 2024?

Mr McGowan: We find ourselves in pretty uncertain times. As the minister spoke about earlier, we are constantly looking at each of these strategies in the global context. We find ourselves in one of the most contested and, I guess, volatile situations in the global trade environment. In the course of the last few months we have released a number of new strategies, and that has given us pause to look at each of our existing strategies and whether they are hitting the mark in the existing global context. For example, shipping rates have gone up 185 per cent over the last couple of years. We have seen increased protectionist behaviours from certain markets. In terms of our offering in the context of those particular strategies that you spoke of, we are constantly looking at those to make sure we are putting the best foot forward for Queensland. There is at the operational level refinement to those in terms of how we execute against those strategies.

Ms GRACE: Director-General, did you ever brief the minister that Queensland had flailed on the international trade landscape and not produced any real, tangible outcomes or that there had been a decade of neglect in Queensland trade relations or that Queensland was ever not open for business?

Mr McKay: No.

Ms GRACE: Mr McGowan, did you ever brief the minister that Queensland had flailed on the international trade landscape and not produced any real, tangible outcomes or that there had been a decade of neglect in Queensland trade relations or that Queensland was ever not open for business?

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have two points of order: one in relation to the imputation of 'flailed' or, alternatively, if the member is able to authenticate the basis of that commentary, I think that would be of assistance. Perhaps the question needs to be rephrased or consideration given to those two aspects.

Ms GRACE: I can table the document if you like.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay; thank you, member for McConnel. If you could give it to one of your colleagues to table, that would assist the committee.

Ms GRACE: There are a couple of documents that we can table in relation to this. Can we table those ones, please?

Mr WHITING: We table these.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just one moment, Mr McGowan. Member for McConnel, could you just point out where this is referred to in the media release you have tabled?

Ms GRACE: Yes. I have a number of quotations here from the minister in relation to this: There is 'a decade of Labor neglect' in that one. There is also another one—I think it is in the ministerial statement, which I will table as well, if you would like. There is a series of statements made by the minister.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: So you are referring to statements in the House?

Ms GRACE: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for tabling those documents, member.

Ms GRACE: Pleasure. Can I go to—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You are assuring the committee that you can authenticate these words?

Ms GRACE: Yes, definitely.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes? Okay. I thank you for your point of order, member for Moggill. We will have the question. It was addressed to Mr McGowan.

Mr McGowan: Member, can you repeat the question? I am sorry.

Ms GRACE: Yes; it was similar to the question to the director-general: did you ever brief or advise the minister that Queensland had flailed on the international trade landscape and not produced any real, tangible outcomes, that there was a decade of neglect in Queensland trade relations or that Queensland was ever not open for business?

Mr McGowan: We have briefed the minister on, I guess, those headwinds I spoke about earlier. We could always be doing more in terms of our international relations but, specifically relating to these comments, no.

Ms GRACE: Minister, I am now going to read some statements you have made as trade minister: that there has been a decade of neglect and that Queensland has had years of drift and delay when it comes to trade, no strategy, no leadership, no outcomes, they did not grow trade, they watched it drift, Labor flailed on the international trade landscape and failed to produce real, tangible outcomes. Both the director-general and the TIQ CEO have outlined that they did not brief you along any of those lines of statements that have been made and that they did provide you with copies of the strategies and the outcomes with regard to what was in place. Minister, on what basis did you make those statements?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just before you answer, Minister: member, I assume that you have authenticated that in the documents tabled?

Ms GRACE: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister?

Ms BATES: I welcome the question and the opportunity to talk about how this government is strengthening Queensland's relationship with many countries, particularly India, following a decade of mismanagement under the member and her colleagues. Between 2015 and 2023, the former government visited India—our fourth largest trading partner—only seven times over almost 10 years. Yes, they released a strategy, but a serious government does not simply release a strategy and say, 'Job done.' The Crisafulli LNP government does take trade seriously, and we know that a meeting or a visit does not constitute a relationship and we certainly know that making announcements on the front page of the *Courier-Mail* does not constitute policy development and consultation.

Following my in-market experience during my trade missions to the markets, and noting the global trade volatility present at the moment, we have sought to refresh all of the investment strategies. They should not just be a document that is sitting on a shelf gathering dust. Trade and our trading relationships are not stagnant. Queensland must adapt to change and pivot where possible to ensure our exporters are taking advantage of opportunities presented, and that is what we have been doing through this process. As with others that we release, we will continue to update our market strategies as needed to respond to the changing global conditions and opportunities that arise and experiences and learnings in market, because our government will not be one that sets and forgets, unlike the Labor government before us, because trade is too important.

Ms GRACE: That is just outrageous.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for McConnel, do you have a further question?

Ms GRACE: I certainly do. Mr McGowan, did you ever brief the minister that documents were sitting on shelves gathering dust and that no action was being taken?

Mr McGowan: We have advised the minister that there is a very fluid global environment. We constantly need to tend to these strategies and adjust to the global settings. Since Liberation Day on 1 April this year we have had to make significant changes in terms of our global trade and, I guess, our settings as a state in terms of who and what we trade. But in answer to your question, not with reference to gathering dust on shelves.

Ms GRACE: Director-General, have you advised or briefed the minister in relation to documents gathering dust on shelves and neglecting our trade relationships?

Mr McKay: I suppose, similar to the response from Mr McGowan, both my advice as the Director-General of the department and as a member of the board of Trade and Investment Queensland, I have participated in those discussions around things such as refreshing Queensland's global brand for trade, the Queensland-China Trade and Investment Strategy and the

Queensland-Japan Trade and Investment Strategy, as part of that process of making sure that we were connecting properly with those important markets.

Ms GRACE: Minister, the statements that you have recently made about gathering dust and neglecting once again seem to be in contradiction of any advice that you have received from two of our senior people in trade relations in this state. Minister, on what basis are you making this statement and is this yet another example of you failing to act with integrity, misleading Queenslanders and damaging investor confidence in this state?

Dr ROWAN: Point or order: there are deliberate inferences, imputations and reflections on the minister contained within that question and I would ask that you rule that out of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Moggill, thank you for your point of order. Member for McConnel, it has some validity. I would ask two things: please ask one question at a time and refrain from making inferences or imputations in asking your questions. I will not rule it out of order at this point, but I would ask you to rephrase both of those questions.

Ms GRACE: Minister, given what we have just heard from the chief executive officer of TIQ and the director-general—that you were never informed of documents gathering dust and that there was any neglect—I ask once again on what basis are you making the statements that you are making in relation to trade relationships?

Ms BATES: Let me be very clear, I cannot rebuild Queensland's trade relationship by setting up a lemonade stand outside Parliament House. These documents are working documents that need to be revisited, hence my comment about gathering dust. We are not going to allow any of the documents to gather dust from the former government. Our trade missions have been really essential. We have revamped our responses to the global uncertainty. We are going to continue to extend our cultural engagements overseas. We need to repair the damage that was caused with some of our major trading partners. Trade missions are essential, they are not optional. If we are serious about repairing the damage done by the former Labor government and unlocking new opportunities for Queensland we will make sure that none of our documents gather dust. They are a working document. They will be updated as required. Trade and Investment Queensland have been very agile. To give you an example of how quickly we have responded to tariffs on beef, within three months we had a 36 per cent increase in beef exports. That is because we were agile; we did not sit there looking at a document that was designed in whatever year—2022. Things change and things change rapidly and that is why we will continue to rebuild the relationships with our trading partners that were decimated by the former government.

Ms GRACE: CEO, Mr McGowan, did you ever refer to trade as a lemonade stand in front of the parliament?

Ms BATES: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. They were my comments just then so how on earth could that have happened? The member is just making things up.

Ms GRACE: No, you are.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There will be no quarrelling across the table. The member for McConnel has asked a question of the CEO of TIQ. I think the CEO can answer the question.

Mr McGowan: I thank the member for the question. No.

Ms GRACE: Director-general, in reference to page 14 of the SDS, can you advise the committee whether or not there has been any damage to international relationships based upon some inflammatory statements that we are hearing from the minister?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for McConnel, I will allow the question, but there are imputations in that question as well. Director-general, could you respond, please, as best you can. I will allow you some latitude.

Mr McKay: I think the essence of the question was whether I have witnessed any impact on trading relationships as a result of comments made by the minister. Certainly I have not heard any comments passed to me, either in my capacity as director-general or as a member of the TIQ board or on our most recent trade mission to Taiwan and Japan, that our trade relationships had been damaged by comments such as those.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for McConnel, we are going to go to government questions, but you will have another opportunity. We will go to the member for Caloundra.

Ms MORTON: My question is to the TIQ CEO. Mr McGowan, can you please provide an overview of the application and recipient determination process for the most recent round of Go Global grants?

Mr McGowan: The Go Global grants program, whilst being difficult to say, is one of the most practical and effective tools that we have in our toolkit. All the grants programs we do have at Trade and Investment Queensland are match funded so it is important to us that Queensland exporters have skin in the game as a part of that process. In June we approved the most recent round of Go Global grants recipients. Funds will be paid this financial year. I will explain the process. It gives us confidence in terms of making sure we are managing the expectations of our exporters in terms of entering global markets. We promote the program widely. We work with our business chambers, we work with councils, we work right across the state to make sure everyone has a fair crack at applying for these grants programs. We assess the export readiness. Small businesses have relatively modest resources to put towards these things. They do not necessarily understand how to apply for government grants, so we work with them on making sure that they are ready to apply for those grants and they are going to hit the mark in terms of those applications.

We also work with our offshore teams about the products and readiness. This is about managing expectations again, as opposed to putting a business through that process: that their offering is actually something that is in demand in overseas markets. We have our onshore and offshore teams work together to say, 'Hey, before you submit this, is this actually viable?' Then we go through a process. At that point we assess export readiness and then we give them the all clear to say, 'Yes, you should submit.' The applications are submitted through the SmartyGrants program. They are assessed by an independent panel of experienced export specialists, including representatives from Austrade, Export Finance Australia, Export Connect, Regional Development, Business Chamber Queensland and regional councils. Each of the panel members follow the Queensland Treasury's grant guidelines. Before assessments begin we brief the panel on the program's objectives, scoring, integrity, making sure any conflicts of interests are declared, and each application is assessed against a clear criteria, including capability, export readiness and the likelihood of achieving an outcome for Queensland. We also prioritise first-time applicants and those targeting priority markets for the state.

Shortlisted businesses undergo independent due diligence. We look at legal, financial, compliance checks, and those who make the cut move forward. At that point a formal recommendation is made to me as the CEO and then I will approve the final list. Approved businesses receive a formal letter of offer and they sign a legally binding agreement and then they must report back on precisely how those funds have been spent. They need to acquit every dollar. Activities funded include market entry advice, packaging and product re-design; it could be legal advice about protecting their IP in particular markets, it could be translation services, export documentation and accreditation, logistics for first-time international shipments—so sending samples overseas, for example. It is a thorough and accountable process. We are really proud of our Go Global grants program.

Ms MORTON: Mr McGowan, what is TIQ's approach to considering applications, particularly in relation to the evaluation of prior recipients and new prospective recipients?

Mr McGowan: As I said earlier, the grants are designed to support small businesses along their journey. What we find with small businesses and exporters is that they evolve. As they grow, they may look to enter a different market in terms of diversifying their offerings. They may have an additional product that they have produced in that time. We certainly do not discourage any repeat business. Obviously, we want as many of our Queensland businesses to export as possible. We have about 6,700 goods exporters in our state. We know that exporters pay more than nonexporters so we are encouraging an increase in the cohort. There are about 500,000 businesses in the state of Queensland. If we had our way, we would have as many of them exporting as possible, so we are always encouraging new entrants.

For that last round that I spoke about earlier, we knew 50 per cent had previously received a grant. We see it as a sign of strength that, as they grow, they are seeking our support to take them further down the path. Our approach to previous applicants is: if they are fit for purpose and they are on their journey to enter a new market or they have a new product, for example, we will put them through the process. This is the value of having a grants program that we can tailor and, as I said earlier, it is all matched funding.

Ms MORTON: Mr McGowan, I understand that in my electorate of Caloundra a recipient of the recent Go Global grant program was Proeger Flow Solutions. Could you please outline why the Go Global funding is important to them and how it will assist them in their export journey?

Mr McGowan: I am just looking at the recipients. I distinctly recall Proeger Flow Solutions because it was the company that was exporting to Botswana. We got a deal for them. It is a really good example of small businesses and exporters in our state that do not necessarily have that global reach.

How do we demystify exporting for them? How do we take them to international markets? This is the value and what differentiates TIQ from other agencies. We have our global network that has these connections around the world and we have the ability to identify opportunities for small Queensland businesses. In this particular instance, I think it was up to \$25,000 in matched funding. We helped them identify partners in the market. We provided targeted support for their eligible support costs. If I recall, they do high-pressure valves in control systems. In this particular project, I think they landed a deal where they were supporting Botswana's mine rehabilitation efforts. It was their very first commercial export sale. We are really proud of this one, taking a small Queensland business from one of our regional centres to Africa.

If you look through the list that was announced by the minister on 30 June earlier this year, you can see companies that have gone from Willawong to the US, Yandina to Romania, and Caloundra West to Hong Kong—an Australian organic distillery. National Plastics & Rubber went from Summer to Peru and a Burleigh Heads company, Skin O2, went to Saudi. It is really taking our small Queensland businesses around the world through the 27 points of presence that TIQ has around the world.

Ms MORTON: Mr McGowan, given the additional funding allocated through the government's first budget to help SMEs succeed in the global trade ecosystem beyond the Go Global grants, what else will TIQ be doing to support Queensland's small and medium enterprises to become export ready?

Mr McGowan: As the minister said in her opening statement and as I have said earlier, we are in some pretty challenging times globally. We see a lot of markets focusing on more protectionist behaviour, so they are inward-looking. At TIQ, we are really clear that we are outward focused and, consistent with the government's messaging, we are open for business. We are actively in pursuit of opening up new doors for our exporters and opening up new opportunities not only in mature markets but also in emerging markets.

The additional funding that has been provided will go to a number of new programs including two major initiatives—major in terms of TIQ. The export acceleration pathway helps new and early-stage exporters become market ready by funding their participation in tailored capability-building programs. It aims to help participating businesses achieve tangible export outcomes such as securing a deal within the first 12 months. Another program has been introduced called Scaling for Global Growth. This program is designed for businesses that are already export ready but want to scale it up. This is helping them become investment ready. We find that businesses do not necessarily have the business acumen or the knowledge to be able to support growth and go about seeking investment without diluting equity. We help them through that process so they can attract additional investment and, ideally, employ more staff and grow and deliver more to our economy. These programs will help business with skills, insights and the networks they need internationally. This is about doing more.

As part of the additional funding provided under the budget announcement, we are looking at our diversification efforts to make sure that we have our exports spread as far as we possibly can. A large percentage of our exports, to the tune of 80 per cent, are resource based. About 70-odd per cent of our exports go to about five markets. We are actively looking to diversify not only what we trade but also who we trade with. We will be doing more to support additional businesses and there will be an increase in the number of market-based strategies that have been released. You have seen the Queensland-China strategy and the Queensland-Japan strategy. We will do ones on South-East Asia, the UK and Europe. We are really unpicking the opportunities and sending some signals globally that we are open for business.

Part of that funding is a global business brand. If they do not know about us, they cannot trade with us. In Queensland we are known as a great destination for a holiday, but we are not necessarily known as a great place to do business or invest. We want to shout from the rooftops about our offering and our value proposition to the world, so that is the development of a global business brand. Some additional missions are in that funding, so it is about getting out there face to face and really attracting investment into the state. It has been a very deliberate campaign. I think it responds to the changes that have occurred, particularly this year, and we are seeing some significant shifts in terms of global trade.

Mr BAROUNIS: Minister, how is the Crisafulli LNP government supporting small and medium-sized enterprises as they prepare to export and navigate the current global trade uncertainty? Of course, the minister is aware that Maryborough is hosting the archery thanks to the Crisafulli LNP government.

Ms BATES: I share the member's excitement about having the archery in Maryborough. We are a strong supporter of Maryborough, particularly their small and medium-sized enterprises. I know that that is an issue that is really close to the member's heart.

Trade and Investment Queensland supports businesses of all sizes across Queensland. Of Queensland's 6,730 goods export businesses, 73 per cent are classified as small and family owned businesses, and that figure increases to 76 per cent in regional Queensland. Recognising this, I am pleased to update the member and the committee on the Crisafulli LNP government's commitment to Trade and Investment Queensland through our first budget.

We have committed an additional \$18 million over the next four years, including \$5 million in the 2025-26 financial year, to, among other initiatives, better support small and medium-sized enterprises to become export ready. While small and medium-sized enterprises already contribute to much of Queensland's trade profile, our government knows that many small and medium-sized enterprises are focused on making ends meet, so much so that they are not able to think about exporting their products or services. However, our government and Trade and Investment Queensland are here to help.

With this funding, small and medium-sized enterprises will be better supported by Trade and Investment Queensland to prepare for export and to take advantage of the opportunities that exist for them. This additional funding will also support the delivery of additional market strategies which will take advantage of opportunities for businesses of all sizes, including small and medium-sized enterprises. This will continue to be important, given the uncertainty within the global trade environment, and the funding will also ensure that Trade and Investment Queensland can continue to deliver the services to Queensland exporters that it does so well to help our exporters thrive on the international stage.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will go to non-government members. Member for McConnell.

Ms GRACE: Mr McGowan, in a press release on 30 June it was announced that 35 businesses received grants. Thank you for your information on the success of the Go Global program. It was reported that at least 10 of those businesses were returned, and I think you said 50 per cent of the grants were return businesses. Can you confirm that this is correct for that program?

Mr McGowan: We have run the Go Global program across multiple years.

Ms GRACE: When did it start?

Mr McGowan: It started about two or three years ago. This was the final round under the current settings. Yes, in the recent round where I talked about the 35 it was about a fifty-fifty split of return businesses which have already had a grant in some form from TIQ since we started running grants programs. We first ran grants in Trade and Investment Queensland in 2020. The other half was businesses which had come seeking our support for the first time.

Ms GRACE: Minister, on 30 June you made a statement that Labor was only interested in announcements and glossy brochures—which is in direct contradiction to what Mr McGowan has just outlined—not outcomes. On what basis did you make this statement and is this damaging our international trade?

Mr CRANDON: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: the member for McConnell is feeling the hurt of Labor's sitting back on its laurels for the last decade.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. What is your point of order?

Mr CRANDON: The member just needs to get over the—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, that is not a point of order.

Mr CRANDON: She knows what the terminology is and how it is used by—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for McConnell, I was dealing with the member for Coomera, who does not have a point of order. Member for McConnell, in your question you stated that statements of the CEO were in direct contradiction to the minister's statements. That is an inference. I will allow the question to be answered, but please refrain from doing that and just ask the question directly in the future. Minister, could you respond to the question?

Ms BATES: I will. Just to put the grants in context: they were advertised this year, they were awarded this year, they were completely new funding and we did not reannounce anything from the former government. Repairing the trade relationships has been my No. 1 priority. There was a lack of

consultation by the former government, particularly with regard to coal royalties. All of our big trading partners read about it on the front page of the *Courier-Mail*. They were shocked to learn that the river of gold of revenue from coal royalties, which was meant to build the hospitals, the schools and the roads for Queensland's future, had largely been left undone and unfunded. Those in opposition must have been in la-la land if they had not realised—

Ms GRACE: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: relevance. The question was directly related to the Go Global program.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I heard the question to be around the basis for which the minister had made particular statements.

Ms GRACE: It was around the Go Global program.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your point of order, member for McConnel. Minister, could you continue your response, please. I take the point that it may have been in relation to the Go Global program. I know you are giving some context around that.

Ms BATES: I am happy to clarify that for the member and for the committee. The Go Global grants were advertised this year. They were awarded this year. They were completely new funding. They did not reannounce any of the former government's programs. Seventeen of the recipients had not received grant funding from TIQ previously—49 per cent. One of the businesses had received a grant previously when it was under different ownership; however, that was prior to the applicant taking ownership.

I am not going to apologise for assisting small to medium enterprises enter the export market. We are removing the barriers for small and medium enterprises—SMEs—to help them get export-ready instead of spending their time trying to navigate tedious red tape put in place by the former government. We are removing barriers to investment as well, and we are not using taxpayer funds to prop up projects that simply do not stack up. Queensland taxpayers deserve better. They deserve a government that respects taxpayer funds, and that is exactly what we are delivering.

Ms GRACE: Mr McGowan, has any advice been given to the minister regarding the impact of the recent cancellation of several high-profile renewable energy projects in Queensland on international investor confidence, and has there been any advice given on 'tedious red tape'?

Mr McGowan: The advice we have given the minister, as we mentioned earlier, has been about it being a very contested environment. Global foreign direct investment flows are down about 11 per cent. It is a highly contested space. The advice we have given has been about being the easiest place in the country to invest—so making sure that we are open for business—and that because time is valued by investors we need to clear as many roadblocks as possible. The advice has really been about how we get a competitive advantage for the state, and the way in which we do that is by providing certainty, clarity and stability to our foreign investors.

Ms GRACE: Director-General, has the department done any further work in this area? Have you been directed by the minister to do any further work in relation to this area of 'tedious red tape' and on other ways in which we can help our international investors?

Mr McKay: That is probably something that fits within the remit of Trade and Investment Queensland under their legislation rather than the department.

Ms GRACE: Minister, with the cancellation of several high-profile renewable energy projects, including the Burdekin pumped hydro project and the privately funded \$1 billion Moonlight Range wind project, what strategies is the government formulating to send a clear message that doing business in Queensland is not hard, uncertain or volatile?

Ms BATES: I reiterate that Queensland is open for business. We are also making sure that any roadblocks to investment are cleared, whether that be by working with my colleagues in Treasury or in the department of state development and infrastructure. Unlike the former government, we do actually work together. I have very clearly enunciated to our overseas trade partners that the practice of the former government to fund projects for a press release and an announcement will not be happening under this government. We will not be using taxpayer funds without their knowledge, and I have clearly reiterated that to our trade partners. They are very keen to invest in Queensland, whether it be in wind, in solar, in batteries, in hydro or in CQ-H2. We are happy to clear roadblocks and work with all of the investors but we will not use taxpayer funds without the taxpayer knowing about it.

Ms GRACE: Minister, the statement sent a clear message that doing business in Queensland is hard, uncertain and volatile—that is the view of Central Queensland grazier Tracey Richards, who spent

many years negotiating the Moonlight Range wind farm on her land before it was cancelled by the government. What information can be provided to Ms Richards that this is not the case?

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a point of order relating to ministerial portfolio responsibilities. I would respectfully suggest that this would be better directed to the energy portfolio, for which we had the estimates hearing yesterday.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Moggill, I think there is relevance to this portfolio as well in terms of encouraging trade and investment. However, member for McConnel, can you provide to the committee authentication of those statements?

Ms GRACE: Yes, I can.

Mr WHITING: I will provide that so you can keep going.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: If there is something in terms of authentication that could be tabled by the member, that would be of assistance.

Ms GRACE: I have the full media statement.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I take that assurance. I will take it as tabled by the member for Bancroft. Minister for Trade, you have the call.

Ms BATES: In relation to the question from the member, that does come under the remit of the Minister for State Development. The former minister would know that we have made sure that all developments—whether they be wind, solar et cetera—have to have social licence. We know how important social licence is for communities so that we can take them on the journey.

I have said time and time again to all of our energy providers that the Minister for Energy will be releasing our Energy Roadmap. It obviously does involve leaving our coal-fired power stations on for longer, which is why we acted so quickly on the Electricity Maintenance Guarantee. On top of that, the Deputy Premier has put new legislation in place to make sure everyone is on a level playing field.

Queensland is a sought-after destination for investment by global companies looking to invest across energy, minerals, food, agriculture, health and infrastructure. Our state is attractive to investors due to our strategic location in the Asia-Pacific, our natural resource endowment, our business-friendly environment, our transparent government and our stable economic growth. Queensland's economic success is built on foreign direct investment, which has helped establish and grow some of our biggest industries. FDI funds essential projects in agriculture and mining, builds cities and towns, employs regional workforces and provides much needed capital technology and expertise to boost productivity.

We know that our big export trade partners want to do business with us. What they want is certainty and stability. They do not want to read announcements on the front page of the *Courier-Mail*. They actually want to ensure we have ongoing dialogue, which is why I have already been to Japan for a second time and will be visiting China for a second time. These are some of our biggest trade partners and we need to make sure that we clear the roadblocks.

Unlike the former government, we do not silo ourselves. I work very closely with the Treasurer and the Deputy Premier and also the Minister for the Environment and Tourism. They are really important. The Minister for Education and I work closely on international students. We have a lot of great stories here in Queensland, and I will continue to go out and sing from the rooftops how wonderful it is to do business in Queensland and how exciting it is in the lead-up to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. There are a lot of opportunities for overseas partners and TIQ is in close contact—

Mr WHITING: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order—

Ms BATES:—with them regularly, as is QIC.

Mr WHITING: Relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Was that your point of order, member for Bancroft?

Mr WHITING: Relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think the minister may have concluded her response; is that correct?

Ms GRACE: Yes.

Ms BATES: I have.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will go to the member for McConnel.

Ms GRACE: Minister, Queensland grazier Tracey Richards said—

As local landowners we feel we have been the collateral damage of politics over project merit.

You have talked about project merit. She states—

The cancellation of a billion-dollar renewable energy project sends ripples far beyond our farm.

At its core, it represents a loss of momentum in Queensland's energy transition.

Minister, will those ripples reach our trading partners and affect investor confidence?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for McConnell, that is very close to being outside the minister's portfolio responsibilities. With respect to the last part of the question related to affecting investor confidence, Minister, will you please respond.

Ms BATES: I think investor confidence was almost demolished under the former Labor government with their announcements, particularly around coal royalties, without any consultation, but I will answer the question. The Crisafulli LNP government welcomes economically viable energy projects from around the world, and I am actively advancing Queensland's strategic investment agenda by engaging with global investors across all priority sectors, including the clean energy sector.

Since becoming minister—and unlike the former government—I have held regular meetings with investors to discuss their energy projects in Queensland and to express the Crisafulli LNP government's support for private investment in the sector and to provide stability and certainty. Social licence is important, and that is why the legislation was introduced by the Deputy Premier.

On top of that, I have led trade and investment missions to key trade and FDI source markets—Japan, Korea, Singapore, India, China and Taiwan—that collectively account for \$72.1 billion of Queensland's goods exports or 68.5 per cent of the state's total goods exports. During these missions I met with companies to spread the message that we are open for business and we are encouraging them to invest in Queensland, including in the clean energy sector.

Ms GRACE: Mr McGowan, have you ever briefed the minister that investor confidence in Queensland was almost demolished and needed to be repaired?

Mr CRANDON: Get over it, Grace.

Ms GRACE: No, you guys get over it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr CRANDON: Get over it. You have been sitting back on your laurels for a decade.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Coomera and member for McConnell, you are both—

Ms GRACE: On what basis are you making that comment?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for McConnell and member for Coomera, that is completely unnecessary and uncalled for. There was a question asked and the CEO of Trade and Investment Queensland had just put his microphone on to answer it.

Mr McGowan: What I can tell you is that we have briefed the minister on how important is investor confidence and providing stable, secure settings. There is a lot of turbulence in the world. For example, last year there were 70 elections around the world. Each of those provides uncertainty. What has happened since Liberation Day has provided uncertainty to investors. The surer the settings we can have here, the more sure investors will be that we are a safe, secure, reliable place to invest. In answer to your question: not to that degree.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We are going to go to government members' questions.

Dr ROWAN: My question is to the Trade and Investment Queensland CEO. I note on page 16 of the SDS that TIQ supports ministerial trade and investment missions and official visits, including those by the Governor and the Leader of the Opposition. Has Trade and Investment Queensland received any request for mission support from the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr McGowan: No.

Dr ROWAN: Minister, I acknowledge the minister and her staff in the trade portfolio area. Minister, can you please outline the importance of undertaking ministerial trade and investment missions and why they are viewed as important undertakings by the Crisafulli Liberal National Party state government?

Ms BATES: I thank the member for his keen interest in the importance of trade to Queensland's economy. It is good to know that members of our government recognise this, even if the opposition does not. Queensland is a trading state. Trade and investment are fundamental to Queensland's economic health, prosperity and resilience.

Queensland's exports of goods and services were valued at \$128.8 billion, accounting for over one-quarter of gross state product, thanks to strong international education, which is \$66.8 billion, and tourism, which is \$4.8 billion, with the benefits flowing across the state. Trade and investment mean jobs for Queensland. Based on research commissioned by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, one in five Queensland jobs is supported by exports, with one in eight Australian jobs being supported by foreign direct investment. Trade and investment underpins regional development, with 41 per cent of Queensland's 6,730 goods exporters based outside of Brisbane. Regional Queensland benefits enormously from exports in resources—beef, sugar and cotton—as well as from inbound investments in tourism and the mining industry.

The Crisafulli LNP government recognises that many opportunities for Queensland and our locally based businesses lie overseas. Our government knows that our international relations are essential; they are not optional. We know the value of ministerial engagements through international missions. They are vital to Queensland's future and they deliver outcomes for this state. Now more than ever international relationships are essential to Queensland's economic prosperity. It is my job to protect and grow them.

By prioritising strong global relationships, supported through our targeted trade missions program, our government knows that Queensland will enhance its competitiveness, ensuring that trade and investment opportunities are mutually beneficial and sustainable. That is why I have been on the ground across the world meeting the biggest buyers of our coal, the biggest investors in our future and the most strategic partners for Queensland's long-term growth.

From China, Japan, South Korea, India, Taiwan and Singapore, I have shown up, face to face, and made it absolutely clear Queensland is open for business. Queensland is open for business. Our stable, political and regulatory environment, robust economic fundamentals and proximity to the Asia-Pacific region make it an attractive destination for global investors and businesses.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, we are extending this session until 11.03 am because we started at 10.03 am due to the changeover of personnel.

Mr BAROUNIS: My question is to the TIQ CEO, Mr McGowan. How is TIQ supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, including in my electorate of Maryborough, to succeed on the global stage?

Mr McGowan: I am very familiar with Maryborough. I grew up in Hervey Bay just down the road, so I am familiar with some of the businesses we support. My parents were both small business owners, so I understand the importance of helping these small and family businesses, the importance of cash flow and helping them export services overseas. We do that in a number of ways. I spoke earlier about our grants programs. We have eight regional offices of dedicated TIQ staff who not only understand trade and investment but who understand the communities in which they live, and they understand the impact that can be made with the services that we provide. We then match that with our overseas presence. It is about understanding the local opportunity and the capability we have here in the state in terms of the supply side and then looking at the demand side overseas and what opportunities exist.

Matching that with targeted advice and grants programs where it makes sense to do so is what we do best, showcasing Queensland's strengths to world buyers and connecting businesses with overseas buyers, investors and partners. Leading trade missions is a good example. We led 15 exporters into Hofex, which is a hotel and food exposition in Hong Kong. For 50 per cent of them it was the first time they had been on a trade mission. We secured \$3.99 million worth of deals just on that mission alone.

We are giving opportunities to small businesses. A good example from Maryborough is Baywood Products. It is a timber-based manufacturing company. I think they do furniture, plywood and a whole range of timber products. They went through one of our grants programs. This is a good example of turning a local domestically focused business into an exporter, helping them for the first time export into the Pacific market, which can be a very challenging market. We have got them into Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and Fiji. By helping them to export their products from Maryborough and our region has enhanced their ability to create more jobs. As I said earlier, exporters pay more than non-exporting businesses. We are very proud of the work that we do.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, we have reached the end of the time allocated to examine the proposed expenditure for the trade portfolio area.

Ms BATES: Deputy Speaker, can I take the opportunity to thank the Treasury officials and Trade and Investment Queensland staff because they will not be required for the next session. Thank you for your hard work.

Ms GRACE: Deputy Speaker, can I thank them as well?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You may. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 11.15 am with the examination of estimates for the portfolio area of employment and training.

Proceedings suspended from 11.03 am to 11.15 am.

 **Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now commence its examination of the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of employment and training. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Would the minister like to make an opening statement of no more than five minutes? Then we will go to non-government members for questions.

Ms BATES: Thank you, Deputy Speaker and committee members, for the opportunity to appear before you today in relation to the proposed expenditure for 2025-26 within the employment and training portfolio. In the critical employment and training portfolio, our government has started work straight away, providing increased training and employment opportunities to help address the skills shortage left by the former Labor government.

Labor's scare campaign on TAFE is over. We are boosting support for apprentices and trainees across Queensland, and we are saving TAFE by delivering a \$201.1 million investment over four years for new TAFE centres of excellence to help secure a pipeline of skilled workers for Queensland's future including: \$78 million for a new TAFE Centre of Excellence in Caloundra, with a focus on construction trades; \$13.6 million to expand the Great Barrier Reef International Marine College in Cairns; \$61.1 million for a new Rockhampton TAFE Excellence Precinct to train more tradies; and \$60 million for a new TAFE Centre of Excellence in Moreton Bay, which will meet the growing demand for skilled workers, particularly within the manufacturing sector.

Our government's investment in the skills pipeline and training facilities that Queensland needs will ensure we meet growing workforce demands including through the provision of \$40 million to train the tradies of tomorrow. In particular, the Crisafulli LNP government's Free Apprenticeships for Under 25s program will see \$10 million allocated over two years to help open doors to meaningful careers for young Queenslanders. We are investing heavily in programs that help Queenslanders into work including the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative and through \$20 million for the Crisafulli LNP government's Returning to Work program, helping women transition back into the workforce.

I am pleased to be working with my ministerial colleagues, including the Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services, to provide pathways for youth disengaged with traditional education, with a focus on providing alternative training and education opportunities.

I am also proud to confirm that in the 2025-26 budget the Crisafulli LNP government has saved numerous programs from a funding cliff left by the former Labor government including helping unemployed Queenslanders to increase their employability through \$20 million for the Back to Work program; providing \$7 million for the Workforce Connect Fund to enhance workforce outcomes for employers, employees and jobseekers; supporting school-to-work transitions through the Regional School Industry Partnership; and delivering \$8.5 million for the Diverse Workforce Queensland program to connect workers with employers.

Within TAFE Queensland, the Crisafulli LNP government is working diligently to ensure TAFE is a secure and well-performing entity. We moved quickly to guarantee 336 full-time-equivalent positions within TAFE Queensland which, under the former Labor government, were otherwise due to end on 30 June 2025—saving Queensland jobs. We are undertaking a \$2 million recruitment drive to employ the next generation of TAFE teachers, ensuring we are able to address Labor's legacy of a skilled worker shortage.

I am also proud to be part of a government that is delivering certainty for Queensland's Regional Jobs Committees, through guaranteed funding for a further two years. This is in stark contrast to the former Labor government, who failed to provide sufficient funding to support the Regional Jobs Committees in their current form. I note these committees provide significant support to our regional communities and workforces, seeking to help close local skills gaps in critical industries, while also allowing regional communities to design their own workforce solutions within the Local Skills Solutions program.

I have also moved swiftly to save important training facilities such as the Queensland College of Wine Tourism, after the former Labor government failed to secure the college's future following the

conclusion of their partnership with the University of Southern Queensland. Moving forward, I will continue to work tirelessly to clean up the mess left within the employment and training space by the former Labor government, delivering a fresh start for the employment and training portfolio.

In closing, I would also like to take this opportunity to once again acknowledge the hardworking public servants across my portfolio, particularly, in the context of this session, within the Department of Trade, Employment and Training, and thank them for their significant efforts as we work together to deliver for Queenslanders.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will go to non-government questions and the member for Bancroft or delegate.

Mr WHITING: We will go to the member for Cairns and shadow minister for tourism, jobs and training.

Mr HEALY: Good morning, everybody. It is 28 degrees in Cairns, a beautiful place for a holiday. My first question is to Mr McKay, the director-general. Director-General, did you provide the minister with advice in relation to new appointments to the board of TAFE Queensland?

Mr McKay: The appointments to the TAFE Queensland board were made following a rigorous legislative process and due diligence processes. The department worked with the office of the minister around ensuring those legislative processes and due diligence processes were properly conducted, including ensuring that the eligibility-for-appointment provisions in section 14 of the TAFE Queensland Act were considered throughout the process. The process involved us developing a skills matrix. That was established. Considering updates to that skills matrix, I provided advice to the minister around the need for, in my view, there to be a very strong focus on governance, commercial acumen and finance on that board, to supplement the skills of the existing board members, as well as making sure there was direct industry experience in the education, training and employment sectors. We also worked to make sure the requirements of section 12 of the act, which sets out the eligibility—

Mr HEALY: Thank you very much, Director-General. Noting that the terms of three former board members were not due to expire until November 2026 and February 2027 respectively, when did the minister first advise you she was seeking to make changes to the TAFE Queensland board?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Director-General, the member for Cairns interrupted while you were concluding your last response. Was there anything else you had to add, or were you pretty much finished?

Mr McKay: I think I was pretty much finished, thank you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cairns, if you could go to the next question that would be appreciated.

Mr McKay: Sorry, member, I think the question—

Mr HEALY: I will ask the question again. Noting that the terms of three former board members were not due to expire until November 2026 and February 2027 respectively, when did the minister first advise you she was seeking to make changes to the TAFE Queensland board?

Mr McKay: I cannot recall exactly when that discussion occurred. There were a number of appointments that were expiring on the board, so we needed to turn our minds to making recommendations to Executive Council to replace those. Exactly when that occurred I cannot recall, but it was to align with the timing of those appointments expiring.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, I am happy if you want to take that on notice. As I said, there were a couple of board members whose terms were not due to expire until November 2026 and February 2027. You said there were some people who were moving on. I get that, but there were some who were not and I understand they were moved on. Did you have any information from the minister that they were moving on people who still had time on the board?

Mr BAROUNIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: I value your job, but I think the question should be directed to you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Maryborough, thank you for your point of order.

Mr McCALLUM: You can ask that question if you want.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Bundamba, there is no need for that. Director-General, that question seems to be rather similar to the last one, but the member has asked it. Could you answer it, please?

Mr McKay: In relation to the issue of appointments being made, I am mindful of the fact that they are appointments that go to cabinet on their way to Executive Council so I am somewhat restricted in what I can say. With a number of appointments that were already expiring, the opportunity was there for us to have a look at the skills composition of the board and to give consideration to ensuring that things that were on our agenda, including ensuring the financial sustainability of TAFE and ensuring that TAFE, consistent with the minister's charter letter commitment, was part of the bedrock—a well-performing TAFE and a sustainable TAFE is part of the bedrock of the skills system—to make sure that we positioned the board to have all of the skills that it needed. Again, I mentioned things such as really strong commercial acumen, strong governance and finance. We took that opportunity to propose a number of appointments.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, as you said, there were appointees whose time had come up and then there were other appointees whose time had not come up. Are you saying there was a review done of the whole board at that time? If that was the case, at whose directive was that?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There are two questions there, member for Cairns.

Mr HEALY: We will do one question at a time, if that is okay with you, Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is in accordance with estimates guidelines, yes.

Mr HEALY: I have given some dates, some months and years. Those people were on the board until November 2026 and February 2027. They were removed prior to their time expiring. Was that a decision that was directed by the minister, was that your decision, or was there an assessment done with the change of government? What instigated that change?

Mr McKay: Those are matters that would be considered by cabinet, so I do not know that I am at liberty to disclose.

Mr HEALY: Fair enough. Did you recommend to the minister the appointment of Vivian Grayson, Andrew Knox and Christopher Lehmann to the TAFE Queensland board?

Mr McKay: The role that I played was essentially in three parts: first, as I mentioned earlier, I was advising on the skill sets that we felt might be required considering the risks and challenges facing the board at that time; second, ensuring that those legislative requirements I mentioned earlier were met, specifically the eligibility requirements in section 14 of the act; and, third, ensuring that the Cabinet Handbook requirements were met, including the rigorous due diligence checks and processes that need to be gone through. I undertook, along with support from departmental officers, each of those aspects in preparing the material for cabinet to consider around the appointments.

Mr HEALY: On what basis did you recommend the appointment of Mr Andrew Knox to the board of TAFE Queensland?

Mr McKay: In considering, firstly, those skills requirements, Mr Knox—as a former managing partner of a large legal firm, Allens—brought significant governance experience to the board. Through our due diligence checks, Mr Knox met all of those requirements for appointment.

Mr HEALY: Deputy Speaker, I would like to table a document. Director-General, I table a copy of an email from Assistant Minister Stoker obtained through RTI suggesting the appointment, as you mentioned, of a former managing partner of Allens to a board. Can you confirm the person she is referring to is in fact Mr Andrew Knox, who the minister appointed in May?

Mr McKay: I think, given the redactions, it is not necessarily possible for me to say without some uncertainty, but certainly Mr Knox was a former managing partner of Allens.

Mr HEALY: And there was not anybody else who was a former director of that company applying for that position and being appointed to that board.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is that a question?

Mr HEALY: More of a statement, sorry. I retract that. Director-General, did you recommend the appointment of Mr Knox at the direction of Minister Bates, Assistant Minister Stoker or anyone from the minister's office?

Mr McKay: One of the things I would say is that all of the appointments were made in accordance with the TAFE Queensland Act and that Mr Knox brings the experience necessary to the role and passed the due diligence requirements.

Mr HEALY: Minister, why did you appoint Mr Andrew Knox to the TAFE board? Is it because Amanda Stoker asked you, or was it the \$5,000 donation to the LNP that he gave?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: I would submit to you that there are inferences within that question, it is inappropriate and it is not in accordance with the standing orders. I would ask you to consider that matter in your ruling.

Mr WHITING: On that point of order: donations are publicly discoverable. The shadow minister's question directly referenced that which is a publicly discoverable fact and that could not be an inference because it is a published fact.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do consider there is an imputation in the way the question has been asked. I would ask the member for Cairns to rephrase it and ask it without that.

Mr HEALY: Minister, I table a copy of a *Courier-Mail* article titled 'Donors and LNP mates on board'. You appointed as chair of the board Mr Vivian Grayson, who was thanked in the maiden speeches of a number of your colleagues. Did the member for Bonney or any other LNP member raise with you or your office the potential appointment of Mr Grayson to a board?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, have you seen the document that was tabled?

Ms BATES: Yes. I thank the member for Cairns for the question; it must be awfully lonely up there in Cairns by himself these days. Only Labor could cry foul over board appointments after spending a decade stacking them with political mates. Under Labor it was not about merit; it was about loyalty. Union officials, party operatives and ideological warriors were parachuted into positions of influence to serve the Labor machine, not Queenslanders.

The Crisafulli LNP government was elected to clean up that mess, restore confidence and put Queenslanders first, and that is exactly what we are doing. We are appointing people with the qualifications, experience and passion to deliver for Queensland, not for a political party. If those opposite are upset that the jobs-for-mates era is over, they will need to get used to it. Queenslanders expect better, and under the Crisafulli government that is exactly what they are getting. In my portfolio, that means making sure our boards reflect current and emerging industry needs and that the people appointed have the real-world experience to help us tackle the skilled worker shortage. Every appointment was made in accordance with the TAFE Queensland Act and every member brings the expertise needed to shape the future of Queensland's workforce.

In relation to Mr Grayson, who was my nominee and appointed chairperson, he has professional associations including Certified Practising Accountant and an associate of Chartered Secretaries Australia and the Governance Institute of Australia. Mr Grayson has also been appointed as chief financial officer and company secretary of publicly listed and private companies, as well as chairperson of an advisory board. Unlike Labor, we are focused on transparency and delivery.

Mr WHITING: Point of order on relevance, Deputy Speaker: the question was whether a member of the LNP raised with the minister's office the potential appointment of Mr Grayson to a board.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think the minister has concluded her response. Member for Cairns, do you have a further question?

Mr HEALY: I do. Minister, why should Queenslanders trust your government when you are putting people who have made financial contributions to your organisation on boards? That is a question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cairns—

Mr HEALY: These are the facts.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Could you repeat the question, please, member for Cairns?

Mr HEALY: Yes. Why should Queenslanders take your government seriously when you are appointing people to boards who have made financial contributions to the LNP?

Mr CRANDON: Point of order—

Dr ROWAN: Point of order—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There are two points of order. I will hear the one from the member for Coomera first.

Mr CRANDON: The question is seeking an opinion. I would ask you to rule on that.

Dr ROWAN: And my point of order relates not only to seeking an opinion but also to the fact that there are a number of suppositions that are now being drawn in this line of questioning.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cairns, that question is seeking an opinion. I am going to move to government questions and we will come back to non-government members shortly.

Mr CRANDON: Minister, can you provide an update on the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program and how it is helping Queenslanders to overcome barriers to employment, including young people in my electorate of Coomera?

Ms BATES: I am pleased to inform the committee and everyone watching that the Crisafulli government is today announcing the latest recipients of our Skilling Queenslanders for Work grants. This is a result of a concentrated effort to ensure funding goes to programs that deliver real results, not just training for training's sake. To ensure respect for your money, changes have been made to Skilling Queenslanders for Work to make sure every dollar delivers practical outcomes for Queenslanders. We have reshaped this program to focus on outcomes, not activity. That means projects must demonstrate clear pathways to employment, training is tailored to local workforce needs, and providers are held accountable for job placements and retention, and we are backing Queenslanders who need it most—women returning to work, culturally diverse communities and people facing barriers like domestic violence, mental health or long-term unemployment.

Some \$47.7 million in funding will support more than 5,881 Queenslanders into training and work. The projects will be delivered throughout the state by 98 not-for-profit, community-based organisations. Participants in the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program will gain qualifications including Certificate I in Construction, Certificate III in Individual Support, and Certificates I and II in Hospitality.

I was delighted to join the member for Coomera recently on the Gold Coast to talk to Everything Suarve—Esuarve. Since 2020, Everything Suarve has helped more than 150 young people, including those involved in youth justice, to turn their lives around. The Big Brother Program focuses on personal development, mental health, life skills and job readiness. In this round of funding, Everything Suarve will receive \$403,000 in funding. This funding will help 60 young jobseekers, many of whom I met the other day, complete a Certificate I in Construction, a first aid and CPR certificate and safety training.

During our visit to Everything Suarve I was touched to hear the story of young Ari. Ari, through the Everything Suarve program, has overcome significant adversity to turn his life around and will soon commence his new job that he gained through completing a Certificate IV in Youth Work. Ari will now be able to help other vulnerable youths turn their lives around. Ari was recently awarded the south-east region Vocational Student of the Year, and I was very pleased to see that happen and the smile on his face. His smile was from ear to ear. We look forward to seeing Ari at the state finals in September. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the member for Coomera for his long-term support and advocacy for Everything Suarve and the work of their director, Joseph, who was instrumental in the success of the program.

Everything Suarve is just one example of the work being done through the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. The Crisafulli LNP government is also proud to announce that the Allison Baden-Clay Foundation will receive \$220,600 in funding for the first time ever through the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program to deliver their Empowered Futures initiative. The Empowered Futures project will assist people experiencing or escaping from family and domestic violence to develop skills and knowledge to create a new life for themselves and their family. The project will partner with various local employers and organisations to assist participants with job trials, interviews and employment opportunities, including apprenticeships and traineeships.

The Crisafulli LNP government is committed to supporting victims of crime and providing opportunities to youth offenders to change the trajectory of their lives through employment and training opportunities. We encourage community-based organisations looking to get involved in the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program to consider applying for the next round of funding. The second round of funding is scheduled to be opened by the department in August 2025.

Mr CRANDON: Thank you so much, Minister. It was a great evening, wasn't it?

Mr BAROUNIS: Can the minister outline an investment the Crisafulli LNP government is making in manufacturing skills and training within the Maryborough electorate, please?

Ms BATES: I know how passionate the member for Maryborough is about ensuring there is a strong and growing manufacturing industry and relevant training for constituents in his electorate of Maryborough. The Crisafulli government is delivering world-class training and real career pathways through the Manufacturing Centre of Excellence in Maryborough, rebuilding what Labor left to decay. Construction is now underway on the \$5 million transformation of the former Maryborough TAFE site, which will become a hub for advanced manufacturing skills and industry-led training. This project is part of \$7.1 million in investment by the Crisafulli government to refurbish the site and support operational costs for the centre, ensuring it delivers long-term value for local industry and workers.

The centre will feature state-of-the-art equipment and tailored programs to support high-value careers in engineering and manufacturing, with a strong focus on rail, defence and energy. The refurbishment of the former Maryborough TAFE site will include general learning areas, modern workshops and amenities to support hands-on advanced training. Through the centre, manufacturers will gain access to world-class training in advanced machining, robotics and welding skills, essential to powering Queensland's industrial future. The Manufacturing Centre of Excellence is a key part of the Crisafulli government's plan to grow Queensland's economy and deliver jobs where they are needed most.

Manufacturing contributes \$20 billion a year to Queensland's economy and is critical to the Wide Bay-Burnett region, which is projected to support more than 10,000 manufacturing jobs by 2027-28. Labor abandoned this site. We are investing in it because Maryborough deserves better. Train manufacturing has been part of Maryborough's identity since the 1800s. This centre will help write the next chapter, with specialised equipment and workspaces focused on rail manufacturing. Maryborough is Queensland's rail manufacturing capital and, under the Crisafulli government, we are backing it with infrastructure and investment that Labor failed to deliver.

This centre of excellence is a major step forward for jobs and training in Wide Bay, delivering industry-led skills, world-class facilities and a workforce that will support growth across the state, including the new Olympic rail fleet.

The 2025-26 budget includes \$4.8 billion for the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program, supporting local jobs and meeting growing demand for rail transport. We look forward to working with the passionate member for Maryborough, Mr Barounis, to make this vision a reality.

Mr BAROUNIS: Director-General, what skills will be prioritised at the new Maryborough Manufacturing Centre of Excellence facility, please?

Mr McKay: Manufacturing is a major part of Queensland's economy, contributing around \$20 billion each year. Whilst I cannot compete with Mr McGowan, who grew up in Hervey Bay, as someone who grew up in Gympie and spent the early part of my Public Service career working in and around Bundaberg I know the importance of manufacturing to that Wide Bay-Burnett region. We know that it is expected to grow around 10,000 jobs by 2027-28 in that region.

The Department of Trade, Employment and Training is leaning in to help grow that workforce and support the local industry. We have recently started a \$5 million upgrade to the former Maryborough TAFE campus, which has been transformed into the new Maryborough Manufacturing Centre of Excellence, with modern workshops, classrooms and facilities. In addition to that, we are investing \$2.1 million to support the centre's operation by Manufacturing Skills Queensland over the next two to three years, and that is in addition to an existing \$8 million funding agreement we have in place with MSQ.

When that centre opens later this year, local manufacturers will have access to world-class training facilities in areas like advanced machining, C and C operations, robotics and welding. There will be certificate- and diploma-level training on offer in engineering, manufacturing, plant operations and related fields. Just as importantly, the centre will work closely with local industry to deliver flexible, accredited skill sets that match the needs of employers across the region. That means more opportunities for local people to train, upskill and find great jobs, including in high-demand sectors such as rail manufacturing.

Mr BAROUNIS: Nine years of neglect is over. Thank you for your support.

Ms MORTON: Could the minister please provide an update on the government's commitment to delivering new TAFE training infrastructure within the Caloundra electorate, including the current delivery timeframes and budget?

Ms BATES: I am excited to update the member for Caloundra, who has been fighting for her community, on the Crisafulli LNP government's commitment to infrastructure in Caloundra and right across Queensland. The Crisafulli LNP government has committed \$78 million in the budget for a new TAFE centre of excellence in Caloundra. The centre will be focused on construction trades and will be built in Caloundra as part of the Queensland government's investment in the region. This new facility aims to deliver accessible pathways and generational infrastructure, particularly in the construction trades. The Caloundra Centre of Excellence is underway. Project planning has commenced, including site investigations and a strategic assessment. I look forward to opening the new TAFE with the member for Caloundra when construction is completed by the expected date in late 2028.

Of course, it is not just Caloundra where we are building new training facilities. Infrastructure projects we are delivering for Queensland include the Great Barrier Reef International Marine College in Cairns which is receiving a \$13.6 million expansion to enhance its training facilities. This expansion will include a new workshop, additional classrooms, offices, staff facilities and a boatshed. The college is a leader in maritime training, offering high-quality hands-on education and state-of-the-art simulators. The expansion will allow the college to train more students, including those from Pacific island nations, and meet the growing needs of the maritime industry.

The Crisafulli LNP government is investing \$61.1 million to establish a new TAFE excellence precinct in Rockhampton at the CQUniversity Rockhampton North campus. This investment is part of the government's broader strategy to address skill shortages in Central Queensland. A \$60 million TAFE centre of excellence is also planned for Moreton Bay with a focus on advanced manufacturing and other trades. The facility is slated for completion by 2028 and will be located near the University of the Sunshine Coast, Moreton Bay campus at The Mill. This investment is intended to address the growing need for skilled workers in the region and support local businesses. Some \$2 million will be invested in the new Marine Centre of Excellence for the southern Moreton Bay islands. The Russell Island centre of excellence will deliver a marine centre of excellence for southern Moreton Bay islands in partnership with industry and TAFE Queensland. Unlike the former government, we care about all of Queensland. You can see this through our commitment to new or improved training infrastructure right across the state. We are working with hardworking local champions, like the member for Caloundra, to deliver the training infrastructure we need and to fix the skill shortage left by the former government.

Ms MORTON: Director-General, what skills will Queenslanders in the Caloundra electorate learn at the new TAFE centre of excellence?

Mr McKay: The investment in the new TAFE centre of excellence for construction trades in Caloundra is a landmark \$78 million investment. It is a major project for one of the state's fastest growing regions. It will ensure local students, apprentices and game changers have access to world-class training facilities right at their doorstep. The centre will specialise in construction and trades training with state-of-the-art workshops and modern learning spaces to support skills development in carpentry, plumbing, electrical and related fields. With a strong focus on practical hands-on learning, the centre will ensure graduates are job ready and equipped with both current skills and an understanding of emerging trends in the construction sector. Planning and preliminary design work is now well underway with construction scheduled to begin in 2026 and the centre opening to students in 2028. The investment will not only help train our future tradies but it will also create construction jobs and stimulate the local economy in its delivery. It is the most significant investment in new TAFE infrastructure that Queensland has seen in decades and it is a clear commitment to growing a skilled workforce for the state's infrastructure and housing needs.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will again go to non-government questions. Member for Cairns.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, I refer to the answer to prehearing question on notice No. 16. Could you confirm the 14,400 fee-free TAFE tranche 2 places refers only to positions funded by the federal government under the National Skills Agreement?

Mr McKay: Yes, the reference there is to the places allocated by the Commonwealth government under the agreement with Queensland in the National Skills Agreement.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, could you advise the committee of the total free TAFE places that have been funded by the Queensland government outside of the allocation of the National Skills Agreement for the period of 2025-26 and 2026-27, please?

Mr McKay: Just bear with me for a moment. Did the member want that by year or overall?

Mr HEALY: Whatever you have got there but, ideally, we would love to see what the numbers are that will be funded by the Queensland government for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 periods.

Mr McKay: So far, in addition to those places that are mentioned in the question on notice No. 16, there have been approximately 29,200 additional fee-free training places.

Mr HEALY: How does that compare to previous years?

Mr McKay: In respect of the additional—

Mr HEALY: The fee-free TAFE that the Queensland government is funding—not the National Skills Agreement. You have just given us a figure; how does that compare to previous years?

Mr McKay: The places in tranche 1 of fee-free TAFE in 2023 were only the Commonwealth allocated places and since then, there has been additional investment by the Queensland government of those 29,200 places.

Mr HEALY: Are those positions funded in the 2025-26 budget from previous appropriations?

Mr McKay: Some of those would be funded from the previous year's budget and some from this year's budget.

Ms ASIF: I wanted to clarify whether the 29,200 you mentioned is from the appropriation for this year that we are discussing or in the past because it seems to me that fewer places that have been funded. I am seeking clarification before I ask my question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You need to ask a question, member for Sandgate.

Ms ASIF: I am happy to ask. My question is to the minister.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You can proceed. The director-general has answered the previous questions.

Ms ASIF: Minister, how many fewer healthcare workers will train and work in Queensland hospitals because a Certificate IV Allied Health Assistance will be less accessible due to your decision not to fund additional fee-free TAFE places?

Ms BATES: I thank the member for the question. I reject the premise of the question. The Crisafulli LNP government is delivering fee-free TAFE. Over 31,300 Queenslanders have already commenced training in 2024. We are on track to meet our commitment of 43,400 places by the end of 2026 as agreed with the Commonwealth.

A yearly cap ensure places remain available across 2025 and 2026. That is responsible planning. Labor's approach would have seen all of the Commonwealth government's funding run out and leave nothing left for fee-free TAFE in 2026. The Crisafulli government is committed to strengthening Queensland's training system, and claims otherwise are false.

There had previously been a commitment to an additional 30,000 state funded free training places over three years. With 29,000 state funded enrolments since 2024, we are on track to deliver these 30,000 places by the end of 2025—a year earlier than the previous government planned—and we will deliver the additional 14,500 places in 2026 required by the Australian government.

Labor's obsession with headlines over outcomes left TAFE underperforming and under pressure. We are investing in TAFE's future. We saved TAFE—new centres of excellence, teacher recruitment and modern training facilities. Labor left a skills shortage and a system in disrepair. We are fixing it with real investment and long-term planning. If the members had checked questions on notice 8, 16, 18 and 19 they would have saved themselves some time today.

Ms ASIF: Director-General, could you please provide the figures for fee-free TAFE places available by each year funded by the Queensland government for the years of 2025, 2026 and 2027? I am happy for you to take that on notice and come back to us if you need to or you could provide that now. That is enrolments per year.

Mr McKay: In terms of the specific numbers, I think we can get those to you by the end of the session. The point I would make is that we have around a \$1.2 billion training and skills grant budget which each year we use to fund fee and low-cost training. We work with a whole range of our industry and regional advisory functions to understand where we should be investing as a priority in free training and in subsidised or low-cost training. We will continue to do that as part of this year's record \$1.55 billion training budget.

The other point I would make is that the Commonwealth government has indicated that it will continue with allocating places to states and territories for fee-free training. That is part of the negotiations we are currently having with the Commonwealth around what the Commonwealth will fund. We will then take that into consideration. We will need to negotiate what the parameters of those are, what qualifications might be delivered, who they might be delivered by et cetera and align those ideally with the state's priorities for investment.

Mr HEALY: We are acutely aware that the federal government is a big supporter of free TAFE. Minister, could you advise why you made the decision not to fund additional free TAFE places in the middle of a skills and labour shortage?

Ms BATES: Only the Labor Party would come up with a question like that. The scare campaign is over. The Crisafulli LNP government has funded fee-free TAFE. We have leveraged additional

funding from the federal government in this budget and we will continue to support fee-free TAFE. We need those skilled workers for the future.

Only a Labor member would ask such a ridiculous question, showing your ignorance, even before asking about 2027 onwards, because that obviously has to be renegotiated with the Commonwealth. We have a very good relationship with the Commonwealth government. I have met with the skills ministers council and I work closely with them to make sure we can leverage as much funding for Queensland apprenticeships and traineeships as we possibly can.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, can you confirm for the committee that all of the measures in this budget are as a result of decisions made by the government of the day and in particular by Minister Bates as they relate to her portfolio?

Mr McKay: All of the matters that are contained in the budget were matters that were considered by government in this year's budget.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, with reference to questions on notice Nos 7 and 20, could you advise the committee where in the 2025-26 budget papers funding for the Back to Work program appears, please?

Mr McKay: The \$20 billion funding for Back to Work does not appear in the budget papers because it is a deferral of money from 2024-25 to 2025-26. To be clear, that is funding that was to have lapsed when the Back to Work program ended as it was due to end on 30 June 2025, with the funding lapsing back to Treasury. Without a positive decision of government to defer the money and allocate it for the purpose of Back to Work, that money would have ended.

Mr HEALY: Could you advise how the Back to Work program will get more jobseekers with \$15 million less funding than in previous years?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is this to the director-general?

Mr HEALY: Yes, sorry to the director-general.

Mr McKay: There are a couple of things I would say. What we have seen is that over the life of the Back to Work program the money that was originally allocated has never been exhausted on an annual basis and has been the subject of a series of deferrals and lapses of funding or redirection of funding, such as \$25 million into the Workforce Connect Fund topped up by a further \$5 million into that fund either later that year or the following year. The average expenditure on Back to Work over the four-year life of the revised program from 2020-21 onwards was just under \$17.5 million, so the allocation of \$20 million we think is sufficient to ensure we can continue to deliver those important elements such as the Back To Work Jobseeker Support Pool, the Back to Work pre-employment support pool and the Growing Workforce Participation Fund.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, I table a copy of correspondence sent to members by TAFE Queensland on 1 July 2025.

Mr CRANDON: Point of order: the member needs to—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: As a visitor, you cannot table things, but I would ask the member for Bancroft or the—

Mr WHITING: I have tabled it.

Mr CRANDON: You did not say you were tabling it. The member for Cairns said he was tabling it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Coomera. Thank you. We have the tabled document. Minister and Director-General, do you have the tabled document? Yes? Thank you. Let's proceed.

Mr HEALY: As said, we have tabled the correspondence sent to members by TAFE Queensland on 1 July 2025 advising the Back to Work program had ceased due to the Crisafulli government's decision to provide no further funding. I would like to also table—

Mr WHITING: I will table it.

Mr HEALY:—which the member for Bancroft will table on my behalf, a copy of the correspondence sent by the minister on 2 July 2025 advising the program was transferred to your department. Can you advise when the decision was made for the program to be administered by the department rather than TAFE Queensland?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Director-General, there are a couple of documents there if you need time to have a look at them.

Mr McKay: That is okay. There are a couple of things I would want to address in that response. First, in relation to the email that was sent by TAFE Queensland, I want to be clear. TAFE Queensland was contracted to assist in the delivery of the Back to Work jobseeker support component of the Back to Work program. It has never been a TAFE Queensland Back to Work program. The Back to Work program is a Queensland government program for which the department contracted, through a service agreement, TAFE Queensland to deliver some of the jobseeker support elements and other things such as a number of small business short courses. That contract came to its natural end on 30 June 2025.

The Back to Work program was not ended, so the premise in the email is incorrect and that has been corrected by the minister in her correspondence. The decision for the delivery of those components to be delivered by the department were made as part of the budget process and reflected the fact—and I had been in conversation with TAFE Queensland around this—that around 50 per cent of the activity that TAFE Queensland undertook in administering the Back to Work jobseeker support component was in fact connecting people with second-chance funding, or what was called C3G Plus.

In April last year the Queensland government launched a Skills Strategy. As part of the Skills Strategy that second chance funding was moving away from C3G Plus to being more readily available through our new Career Start and Career Boost components, which replaced C3G and User Choice and high-level skills funding. So with the availability of second chance funding for training being more readily available and able to be delivered directly to jobseekers, the vast component of what TAFE was delivering was no longer needed to be delivered by anyone, so we took the opportunity to say, 'We have the same connections with the same stakeholders in our regions.' We have a well-resourced Back to Work team within head office that works with our regional officers who are able to deliver those other components around connecting jobseekers to the other components of the jobseeker support pool.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am going to ask the member for Maiwar if he has a question he would like to ask.

Mr BERKMAN: I have; thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Minister, as we have discussed, your portfolio includes responsibility for TAFE but, as I understand it, the Queensland Teachers' Union, which represents TAFE teachers, have repeatedly sought to meet with you but have so far been refused. Minister, how many times since your appointment have you met with or refused to meet with QTU and TAFE teacher representatives and why?

Ms BATES: I refute the assumptions in that my office has met with the Queensland Teachers' Union. As the member would be well aware, the Minister for Education has carriage of the discussions about enterprise bargaining agreements with not only TAFE but Education Queensland staff.

Mr BERKMAN: The question though, Minister, was have you met with the QTU?

Ms BATES: I have answered that question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, given the hour, I am going to ask for a couple of quick government questions and then I know the minister will need to sum up.

Mr CRANDON: Can the minister outline how the government is ensuring that apprenticeships are accessible to young Queenslanders, including those living in the electorate of Coomera?

Ms BATES: I thank the member for the question because I know how passionate he is about ensuring affordable access to apprenticeships for constituents in his electorate of Coomera. The Free Apprenticeships for Under 25s program offers fully subsidised training for more than 130 priority apprenticeship and traineeship qualifications, creating employment pathways, removing financial barriers to apprenticeships and traineeships and engaging with disengaged young Queenslanders across the state. The Crisafulli government is delivering for Queenslanders with more training and employment opportunities to help address the skills shortage left by Labor, having saved the free apprenticeship program for under-25s after Labor failed to fund the program beyond 30 June of this year. Make no mistake: under Labor this program would have ended, but the Crisafulli LNP government stepped in to save it, reflecting our government's firm commitment to training the workforce needed to build Queensland's future, particularly ahead of the 2032 games.

The Free Apprenticeships for Under 25s program will mean young Queenslanders can be trained in high-demand trades without needing to take on debt, and I was pleased to recently hear firsthand how this program is making a difference for young Queenslanders in Cairns. I had the opportunity to speak with Rhianna, a former apprentice who is now working full time and aiming to step into a leadership role. This is precisely the kind of tangible outcome that under the Crisafulli LNP government

we are focused on delivering for young Queenslanders—real skills, good jobs and a stronger future for their wider community.

The member may also be interested to know that this funding forms part of the Crisafulli LNP government's \$50 million budget allocation to train essential tradies including electricians, carpenters and plumbers to deliver the critical infrastructure Queensland needs and to help fix Labor's skills shortage. We know that Queensland is facing a serious shortage of skilled workers after years of Labor inaction in this space and it is why the Crisafulli LNP government is backing real training for real jobs, restoring confidence in the wider VET sector and working to support industries that need workers now, and it is delivering results for employers and employees alike. I have every confidence that with the investment the Crisafulli LNP government is making into skills and training Queensland can once again lead the way in this space.

Mr CRANDON: One final quick question to the director-general. Mr McKay, what skills will be prioritised under the Free Apprenticeships for Under 25s program that the minister has just been outlining?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Director-General, one minute please.

Mr McKay: Some of the key areas that will be supported through the 130-plus priority apprenticeship and traineeship pathways will include construction, covering essential building trades like bricklayers, carpenters, electricians, engineers and plumbers; civil construction, including major infrastructure development projects including new roads, electrical infrastructure and water supply; the care industry, so training the next generation of early childhood educators and our aged and disability support workers; food security, creating opportunities from paddock to plate through primary industries, baking, butchery and cookery; and of course other vital industries like automotive, aviation, communications and manufacturing. We would expect in respect of your electorate, member, that over 1,400 young people employed in your electorate will receive assistance through the free apprenticeship program in 2025-26.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Director-General. Members, there was one question which the director-general, I believe, was going to come back with some details about.

Ms BATES: I think I answered that question for you.

Mr Healy interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just one moment before anyone else seeks the call. The note I have is in relation to figures for fee-free TAFE funded by the Queensland government in various years—

Mr HEALY: That is correct.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:—2025, 2026 and 2027 and—

Mr HEALY: By enrolment year.

Ms ASIF: That is right.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Director-General, do you have some details to share with the committee?

Mr McKay: I do, but I do not think it will meet the requirements of by enrolment year.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The details you have at this stage are the details you have.

Mr McKay: Okay. So through free nursing there are 3,000 training places available for the Diploma of Nursing in 2025. The 2025-26 budget includes a \$50 million additional investment to train future tradies. Some \$10 million of that additional \$50 million in funding will be allocated to the extension of the Free Apprenticeships for Under 25s program for another two years to 30 June 2027, but they are all of the details I have on—

Mr CRANDON: Another own goal for the member for Cairns.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Director-General, we have now reached the end of the time—

Ms ASIF: Just a quick point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:—for—

Ms ASIF: Just a quick point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr WHITING: Point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Sandgate, I have just concluded the time for the examination of estimates—

Ms ASIF: My point of order is—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:—because we are at the end of this session.

Ms ASIF: That did not answer the question that was taken on notice and agreed to be provided by the end of the hearing.

Mr CRANDON: Thank you, Minister. Appreciate everything you have been doing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, the details provided by the director-general—

Ms ASIF: They were not what I asked and what was taken on notice.

Mr CRANDON: Thank you, Director-General.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: They were the—

Ms BATES: Mr Deputy Speaker—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Coomera, sit down please.

Ms BATES:—can I just take the opportunity to thank the staff from the—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Sandgate—

Ms BATES:—department of employment and training, particularly for Back to Work.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: If you could just please pause, Minister.

Mr WHITING: The member for Sandgate has a motion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Sandgate, the question has been answered as was indicated and taken on notice by the secretariat staff.

Mr WHITING: The member for Sandgate—

Ms ASIF: It has not.

Mr WHITING:—has a motion.

Ms ASIF: It has not been answered. Just to clarify, I asked by enrolment years specifically.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: And the session has been closed, member.

Mr WHITING: The member for Sandgate has a motion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Sandgate has not been given the call, member for Bancroft, so you cannot say that and I would ask you to seek the call in the future—

Ms ASIF: I have been seeking the call, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, and I have been trying to end the session because, in accordance with the order of the House, the time for the examination of these estimates has expired. So, members, we have now reached the end of the time—

Ms ASIF: Just did not want to answer the questions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:—allocated for consideration of the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training. There were no questions taken on notice. I thank you, Minister, officials and department officials for your attendance. This concludes the hearing and I want to thank committee members and visiting members, Hansard and parliamentary broadcast staff and other staff. I declare the hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 12.20 pm.