

## **WEDNESDAY, 24 JULY 2024**

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### **ESTIMATES—HOUSING, BIG BUILD AND MANUFACTURING COMMITTEE— STATE DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE; INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS; RACING**

#### **Estimate Committee Members**

Mr CG Whiting—Chair  
Mr JJ McDonald  
Mr DJ Brown  
Mr MJ Hart  
Mr RI Katter  
Mr TJ Smith

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#### **Members in Attendance**

Mr JP Bleijie  
Mr SSJ Andrew  
Mr MC Berkman  
Mr TL Mander  
Dr A MacMahon  
Ms A Leahy  
Mrs DK Frecklington

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#### **In Attendance**

Hon. G Grace, Minister for State Development and Infrastructure, Minister for Industrial Relations  
and Minister for Racing

Ms K Dougherty, Chief of Staff  
Mr C Hinton, Senior Policy Advisor  
Mr S Stark, Senior Policy Advisor  
Ms T Reeves, Senior Policy Advisor  
Mr J Hunter, Assistant Policy Advisor  
Ms L Booth, Senior Policy Advisor  
Mr S Jones, Policy Advisor  
Mr K Hopkins, Policy Advisor

#### **Department of State Development and Infrastructure**

Mr G Fraine, Director-General  
Mr G Coggan, Coordinator-General  
Ms D McNamara, Chief Executive Officer, Economic Development Queensland  
Ms N Wilde, Deputy Director-General, Strategy, Insights and Advisory Group  
Ms D Heelan, Acting Deputy Director-General, Office of Industrial Relations

**Queensland Racing Integrity Commission**

Mr M Letts, Acting Commissioner

**Racing Queensland**

Mr J Scott, Chief Executive Officer

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**The committee met at 8.30 am.**

**CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the Housing, Big Build and Manufacturing Committee open. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past and present. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whose lands, wind and waters we all share.

I am Chris Whiting, the member for Bancroft and chair of the committee. With me here today is Mr Jim McDonald, the member for Lockyer and deputy chair. The other members of the committee are: Mr Don Brown, the member for Capalaba; Mr Michael Hart, the member for Burleigh; Mr Robbie Katter, the member for Traeger; and Mr Tom Smith, the member for Bundaberg. The committee is being joined by other members who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions at today's hearing.

I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at the chair's discretion or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised its hearings 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 to ensure that their 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 are not permitted in the chamber.

This year the House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearing. Today the committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in Appropriation Bill 2024 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for State Development and Infrastructure, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the time 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. I remind everyone here that the first session will be economic development and the second session will be infrastructure and the Olympics. They shall not cross over. We will first examine the proposed expenditure of the Minister for State Development and Infrastructure, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing until 12.45 pm. We will suspend proceedings for a break from 11 am to 11.15 am.

I remind everyone that these proceedings are subject to the standing orders and rules 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 in its examination of the relevant Appropriation Bill or otherwise assist the committee to determine whether public funds are being effectively spent or appropriate public guarantees are being provided.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Minister for State Development and Infrastructure, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing, the director-general, officials, departmental officers, staff 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 or director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of state development 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 GRACE:** I would like to begin by joining you in acknowledging the traditional owners and paying my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I welcome the opportunity to address the Housing, Big Build and Manufacturing Committee. Since last year's estimates hearing, while I continue as Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing, I am delighted to now also have state development and infrastructure within my portfolio. Chair, I will combine all of my portfolios into this opening statement. Given the large number of achievements and our limited time, this is just a highlights reel.

In state development and infrastructure we are supporting the emerging industries that will shape the future of our state. From our half billion dollar Battery Industry Strategy to bringing significant investment to our state from companies like Jet Zero for sustainable aviation fuel in Townsville and Fortescue Future Industries for green hydrogen in Gladstone, we are at the forefront of securing jobs for Queenslanders and innovative industries for our regions and ensuring our strong manufacturing communities thrive now and into the future.

Our highly successful Industry Partnership Program, IPP, is supporting projects in a range of these industries, including: advanced manufacturing, defence and aerospace, biomedical, biofutures, critical minerals, agriculture and food, and resource recovery. If COVID-19 taught us anything, it is the importance of local capability rather than relying on global markets. Our IPP support for UQ and Emory University will see Queensland lead the world in vaccine development. It was fantastic to meet these incredible researchers when I visited their St Lucia campus. This complements other groundbreaking work we are supporting at Sanofi's \$280 million Translational Science Hub and the needle-free vaccine technology being developed by Vaxxas.

We are also shaping our state and creating more sustainable, liveable communities through master planning right across Queensland. It has been my pleasure to visit places as diverse as Currumbin Eco Parkland, Great Keppel Island, South Bank, the Bundaberg health precinct and Urangan boat harbour as part of this.

As the committee knows, Queensland is growing, which means we need more hospitals, roads, rail, housing, schools, health care and energy infrastructure. That is exactly what our record \$1.7 billion Big Build delivers. It is the biggest decade of infrastructure in Queensland's history. This investment will bring a generational change, creating more jobs, better communities and stronger regions. It is about building the places and spaces that Queenslanders will enjoy for generations to come.

Almost 70 per cent of this work is happening in regional areas and represents the biggest investment in regional job creation in this state's history, supporting around 50,000 jobs outside of greater Brisbane in 2024-25 alone. From the Rockhampton Ring Road, M1 Pacific Motorway upgrades, new hospitals in Bundaberg, Toowoomba and Coomera, CopperString, the Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline, new indoor sports centres across SEQ, upgrades to Barlow Park in Cairns and a brand new Brisbane Arena at Roma Street, we are transforming Queensland.

When it comes to Brisbane 2032, we are going to deliver a games to be proud of that leaves a lasting legacy in communities right across Queensland under the IOC New Norm approach. There are eight years to go, and we have done more than any host city this far out. We have: laid the vital governance foundations; signed an historic \$7.1 billion investment agreement with the Commonwealth; stood up our legacy committee; created a new independent delivery authority; put details of more than half a billion dollars of tenders supporting over 1,000 jobs out to market; and launched You for 2032, Australia's largest ever athlete talent identification program.

I have personally visited several venues that will be upgraded and the sites that will host brand new centres, including the Kawana Sports Precinct, Chandler and QSAC. I can tell you that these games are going to be transformational for sporting clubs and communities right across our state. Of course, this weekend our LiveSites kick off, so whether you are on the Gold Coast, South Bank, Longreach, Cairns or somewhere in between, I would encourage you to get out there and cheer on our Olympians and Paralympians.

Economic Development Queensland is playing a vital role in our Homes for Queenslanders plan and ensuring we can build more homes faster, with new laws allowing them to deliver more diverse social and affordable housing for our rapidly growing state.

In the industrial relations portfolio, the Miles government continues our proud record of standing up for and supporting Queensland workers with our nation-leading reforms. We will never rest on our laurels, so in the past 12 months we have strengthened worker protection and representation through health and safety laws passed in March. We have introduced legislation that contains nation-leading reforms for workers compensation, and updates to the Electrical Safety Act will ensure these laws keep pace with new and emerging industries. We are also strengthening our nation-leading industrial manslaughter laws. We have introduced more nation-leading entitlements for public servants, including 10 days reproductive leave and superannuation on all parental leave for the first 52 weeks—paid or unpaid. Of course we finally have a national ban on engineered stone. I am proud Queensland led the way to get this dangerous product out of our workplaces once and for all.

In the racing portfolio, Racing Queensland has released its latest independent economic data, which found the economic contribution of the Queensland racing industry has soared to a record \$2.4 billion—a 100 per cent increase since Labor came to office in 2015, supporting nearly 16,000 jobs. Racing is thriving in this state, and our betting tax reforms are providing not only certainty for the industry but also a big boost to our country racing clubs, which are the heart of so many of our regional and remote communities.

Chair, thank you for the opportunity to make this opening statement. I am happy to take questions from the committee. I welcome all the witnesses who are with me here today.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Minister. We will now go to questions.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** My question is to the director-general. As part of the Energy and Jobs Plan, the department of state development announced a \$40 million Regional Economic Futures Fund to support economic diversification projects in four resource regions in Queensland. The department then developed a regional transformation strategy. Did the department roll out that strategy to the four regions or did it outsource the work?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. As you have mentioned, certainly work has been done on four regional transformation strategies. They comprise the areas of: Greater Whitsunday; Central Queensland; North-West, including the corridor to Townsville; and the Darling Downs, South-West and South Burnett. Those regional transformation strategies have been worked on with local stakeholder advisory committees and local governments. Following the local government elections this year, there was another round with those stakeholder advisory committees to ensure those bodies of work represent the views of those local communities. With regard to the work that was undertaken for those, there certainly was some engagement of external parties. The fee for those services, as per a previous QoN asked, was in the region of \$790,000.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Who was awarded the consultancy fee for the \$790,000, please?

**Mr Fraine:** Ernst & Young.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, why did the Queensland government bring in EY consultants to do what Queenslanders would think would be called business of the department of state development—to roll out their own program across the state?

**Mr Fraine:** As often happens in the work that we do as a department, we are actively seeking to engage with the communities right across the state. This happens with regard to our regional footprint and the presence that we do every day. It is also the way we work across the breadth of the portfolio that we do. From time to time, we engage external parties to support the work that we do—not replace the work that we do but support and ensure we are indeed making best use and best approach to engaging with our communities—and this is an example.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, the futures program for the four resource regions in Queensland was about transition strategies as part of the Energy and Jobs Plan. The funding was \$40 million. The department have spent nearly \$800,000—so nearly a million dollars—to roll out a \$40 million program. Having developed the program, did the department not have capability within the department with the personnel to roll it out? It is an extraordinary amount of money to roll out a government program that is the sum of \$40 million.

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you for the question. Of course, the work that is going on with the regional transformation strategies is about a broader conversation and a broader range of funding than simply the \$40 million. It speaks to a range of the services and programs that government puts in place. I would say two things: again, it is assisting and working with existing public servants to ensure we are doing the best job possible to work with our communities; and there is also the ability to use, from time to time, external parties to provide a sense of independence and provide an outside-in perspective and assist communities provide that outside-in perspective to government for the work that we do.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you, Director-General. I have had a look at the consultants from EY who assisted in the program. I have been given a copy of the presentation that has been given to the regions, which I do not understand is a public document but I have a copy of it. The two consultants look like they are based in Sydney; is that correct?

**Mr Fraine:** I am not aware of where those consultants are based. I am happy, with the minister's agreement, to clarify that information for you during the course of this session.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The names I have here are Nick Conti and Ella Papandrea from EY based in Sydney, pursuant to their LinkedIn accounts. Minister, is it suitable for Sydney-based consultants to be telling regional Queenslanders what their community should look like in the future?

**Ms GRACE:** Thank you for the question. I think this is based on expertise in the area. As the director-general said, I think it is important when we go out consulting that the community thinks it is not department-led—that there is an independence in the issues they raise and that we are not coming with a locked-in particular policy or whatever and we are open to all of those consultations. I do not think it is unsuitable that EY gives their best people. They may come from Sydney. For all I know, they could be Queenslanders who are living in Sydney. I do not know the two people. I do not think it is neither suitable nor unsuitable. We want the best people to go out there and do this very important work to help our regional communities.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, you spoke about expertise. Are you suggesting to this committee that there were no experts in your department, no capability in the department—which I find astounding—and no experts in Queensland or professionals with the expertise to be able to roll out this \$40 million program? It looked like the government went to Sydney to get expertise.

**CHAIR:** There are some imputations and inferences in there, but I will let that question go. Minister, you have some flexibility in replying to that.

**Ms GRACE:** Thank you, member. I think that is a big stretch. I said nothing of the sort.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Well, the minister did say 'expertise', and the two consultants, from what I have seen on their LinkedIn accounts, are based in Sydney. Did Queensland not have any expertise to be able to roll out this program?

**Ms GRACE:** I think I said that we wanted the best people to do this work—and if those experts were possibly Queenslanders living in Sydney or EY decided that those two people were the best to do the work. I think it is a bit of a stretch in trying to put words into my mouth as to what you said before. Of course we have the expertise, but, as I said, I think it is very important that, when we are consulting, people think they are independently being heard and the department is not coming with a particular view on the issues they are raising. I think that is a really important part for a significant program that we will be rolling out very soon. It is vital that these strategies are developed with these communities.

If your only issue is that these two people come from New South Wales—and I am not sure of the context of that and we are checking that as we go—then I think it is the best outcome and I think everyone has been very happy with the consultation that has occurred. I requested a further round of that when the new councils were elected, because there had been quite significant changes in those areas and I think that was only fair. That was led by the assistant minister and member for Mackay. It is right to take the time to ensure these newly elected councils were fully briefed. We expect the regional transformation strategies to be issued very shortly. We are in a very sound position. If the only issue you have is that these people come from Sydney, let us get the information before we start to speculate.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** That is not my only issue. I have an issue with \$800,000 being spent to a consultancy agency which I thought capacity should have been in the government's department to be able to handle that. Director-General, can you advise me how much the government, in the last 12 months, has been spent on external consultants, please?

**Mr Fraine:** How much the government has spent on external consultants?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you.

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member for the question. Certainly in terms of the amount spent by the department over the last 12 months, the department has spent around \$150 million across 588 contractors during 2023-24. Forty-three per cent of that was spent on building and construction services. Twenty-seven per cent was spent on building and construction allied services. For instance, if we look within the work of Economic Development Queensland, it spent \$72.8 million out of that amount. If we look within the work of EDQ, for instance, typical examples of that contractor spend are things like \$16 million to Shadforth for three contracts to do civil, electrical, vegetation clearing and earthworks at places like Songbird Oxley estate, Carseldine Village, Sunshine Coast Industrial Park. Songbird Oxley estate, for example, is expected to create 87 dwellings, Carseldine Village is expected to create up to 600 or so dwellings, and Sunshine Coast Industrial Park is expected to create 100 jobs during construction and nearly 1,400 jobs in an ongoing sense. There are those works that EDQ undertake and there are a range of other contracts that the department has led during that period.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, with the \$150 million which you have just explained involves some civil works and things, I am after the reports. What has the department spent on reports, external consultants, like the \$800,000 on EY, what have they spent on reports—not the civil works and contractual works, the actual reports?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. In terms of how much was spent in regards to those reports, I would say the actual spend is on professional services contractors has been \$33.7 million.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** \$33.7 million on consultants?

**Mr Fraine:** On contracts.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Chair, may I have the Coordinator-General, please?

**CHAIR:** We will call up the Coordinator-General.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Coordinator-General, good morning. I refer to a recruitment post put up last night by OnTalent advising that, 'If you are looking for a career and not a job and want to join a passionate team, become a state shaper today by joining the Office of Coordinator-General. We are seeking candidates for the following positions: Assistant Coordinator-General, Executive Director Infrastructure and Projects, Executive Director New Economy, Executive Director Energy, Executive Director Strategy and Business, Executive Director Planning and Industry.' Are these new positions that have been advertised last night or have they had people resign and you are filling those positions? Can you explain to the committee? It seems extraordinary. I understand you have only joined the role this year yourself. Can you explain the six positions, please?

**Mr Coggan:** I thank the member for the question. Only one of those positions is a new position. When I commenced in the role, I had quite a few people acting in roles. Since I have commenced, two executives have also left the organisation to look for new opportunities, so this is my opportunity in terms of I have done a range of work, looked at reshaping our organisational restructure and now I am going to market for those roles.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Out of the six positions, one is a new role. Which role is that?

**Mr Coggan:** The new role is the Executive Director, Strategy and Business.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The other roles are being filled. Have they all been acting roles?

**Mr Coggan:** Of those, there have been three roles where people have been acting in them and two roles have been vacant.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Is it concerning, as the Coordinator-General, that the Coordinator-General's office, responsible for coordinating billions of dollars worth of projects in Queensland, seems to have so many acting roles, vacant roles, positions not being filled, positions now advertised?

**Mr Coggan:** I think it is a great opportunity for myself in terms of shaping the future of the Coordinator-General. We are going to market now. We have a really clear view in terms of the skills and requirements we have for those roles. The people who have been acting in those roles have been doing a very good job and are capable people.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Coordinator-General, can you advise the committee what stage of assessment the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme has reached, please?

**Mr Coggan:** I thank the member for the question. Are you talking the Pioneer-Burdekin proposal?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Yes.

**Mr Coggan:** The Pioneer-Burdekin proposal is currently not with the Office of the Coordinator-General. We have had some pre-lodgement conversations with Queensland Hydro in relation to that project becoming a coordinated project at the appropriate time, but that is not yet before me.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Sorry, Coordinator-General, just to confirm, you are saying that the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme, which is the centrepiece of the government's Energy and Jobs Plan, is not currently a coordinated project before you?

**Mr Coggan:** I thank the member for the question. No, it is currently not a coordinated project.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** But the Borumba Pumped Hydro project is?

**Mr Coggan:** I thank the member for the question. Yes.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** That explains something, Coordinator-General, because I have been onto your website looking at your projects and I could not find the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme. Can you explain to the committee in your assessment why the Borumba Pumped Hydro scheme, which is a \$14 billion project, would be subject to a coordinated project pursuant to your office, but a project bigger in scale and the centrepiece of the Energy and Jobs Plan, the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme, which stakeholders say estimated now in reports over \$20 billion is not a coordinated project, but the smaller one is?

**CHAIR:** Just before the answer is started, member, your questions are getting longer preambles. I ask you to keep the questions brief and to the question, but I will go to the Coordinator-General.

**Mr Coggan:** I thank the member for the question. In relation to the Coordinator-General's role, a proponent will come to the Coordinator-General and request that the project become coordinated. In relation to the Borumba project, we have received that request. At this point in time, we have not received a request from Queensland Hydro in relation to the Pioneer-Burdekin project; however, we are in pre-lodgement discussions with and expect an application in relation to a coordinated project at the appropriate point in time for the project.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you, Coordinator-General. Can you advise the committee, in those preliminary discussions, what the estimated cost is of the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme is, please?

**Mr Coggan:** I thank the member for the question. I will have to come back to you during the hearing

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you. There were reports the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme was \$14 billion. There have been media reports it is over \$20 billion. Stakeholders have told me it could be \$30 billion.

**CHAIR:** Members, we have some numbers being thrown around here.

**Ms GRACE:** It is a different department.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Well—

**CHAIR:** Wait, I am speaking—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Well, the minister just interrupted.

**CHAIR:** Wait, I am speaking.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** So, it is okay for the minister to interrupt, but I can't?

**CHAIR:** Member! I am speaking. I was about to say you are throwing around some figures here. If you want an answer on that, there will need to be some verification instead of just throwing some figures around. Member, can you come back to your question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Yes, Chair, the person who can verify the cost is the Coordinator-General in the preliminary discussions, so that is why I am asking the Coordinator-General to confirm to this committee what the estimated cost now is of the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme which I assume the departments have advised the Coordinator-General in the preliminary discussions the Coordinator-General has told this committee he has already had.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, you have an assumption about the cost there. I do not know if the Coordinator-General has that, but let's see what answer we get.

**Mr Coggan:** I thank the member for the question. I do not have that information in front of me, but we will endeavour to the committee before the end of the hearing.

**CHAIR:** Bear in mind, too, that only the minister can take the questions on notice.

**Ms GRACE:** We will try to get back to you beforehand. Sorry, Chair, I hope you do not mind me quickly interrupting, I have an update on the EY issue which I will just give.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, I happy for you to give that at the end, minister.

**CHAIR:** No, let's hear it now.

**Ms GRACE:** As we know, EY is a national company. We had engagement with more than eight EY staff members. There were four large areas, so more than just two. Two were from Sydney, but others were all from Queensland, and the head consultant was based in Queensland.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You confirm my point: you employed Sydney-based people to tell regional Queenslanders how to live their lives and what jobs they should get. Thank you for confirming, Minister.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, I do not think that was a question; it was more of a comment. Can we go to a question from you, member for Kawana?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, page 16 of the Treasurer's budget speech says—

That investment in the Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro Storage scheme is fully detailed in the budget papers, fully funded—and fully supported.

The problem is, Minister, having read the budget papers I cannot find much, or anything really at all, about the centrepiece of the Labor government's Energy and Jobs Plan, the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme. Is this because Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme is another 'hydro hoax'?

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, you know how this operates. You were going really well until the end. Can you rephrase your question without the argumentative part at the end?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, is the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme, the centrepiece of Labor's Energy and Jobs Plan, another Traveston Dam debacle or a Gabba debacle?

**CHAIR:** Give it another go, member for Kawana. That was a good try, once again, but you are being argumentative.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Queenslanders would resonate, with the issue of the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme and the rhetoric that the government have given, with other—

**CHAIR:** Just ask the question, member for Kawana. Make it straightforward.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You have asked me to rephrase. I am. Minister—

**Ms GRACE:** Pumped hydro energy storage is a key—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister—

**Ms GRACE:** You have asked me two questions already. Do you want a third go at it now?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The chair has asked me to repeat it and change it. Minister, I am giving you the opportunity to explain how much the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme is—the total cost—and when it will be funded and delivered. After all, apparently it is the centrepiece of Labor government policy.

**Ms GRACE:** Pumped hydro storage is a key part of the low-emissions Queensland energy grid and reaching Queensland's renewable energy goals in the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan. There are two long-duration pumped hydro projects proposed for Queensland that are being planned by Queensland Hydro. The Borumba pumped hydro, which is due for completion in 2030, was declared a coordinated project on 11 October 2023 and as a prescribed and critical infrastructure project in January 2024, so these are not hypotheticals; these are real projects. The Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro Project is due for completion in 2032. I note that a request for a coordinated project declaration is yet to be received from the Office of the Coordinator-General and is expected in 2025. Obviously, this work needs to be done before it is declared.

The Borumba project will be the first long-duration pumped hydro to be built in Queensland. In addition to the two projects proposed by Queensland Hydro, there are other proposed entities that are at the moment building pumped hydro. Pumped hydro is not a hoax or a fallacy; we have one at Wivenhoe Dam right now.

Private sector investment is a very important part of renewable energy going forward. For example, the Kidston project is now under construction following Coordinator-General evaluation of the coordinated project in 2019. These private projects are smaller in scale and generated capacity than public projects. To suggest that this is something that is not real or happening is not correct. I know that the Coordinator-General is obtaining the up-to-date figures in relation to projects in the north and south renewable energy zones. They do not lie in my portfolio—they are in the portfolio of Minister de Brenni—but we will get those figures for you so we do not bandy around figures which have no substance to them. I add that in 2023 the budget approved \$6 billion in equity funding for the Borumba and the total cost was estimated in those budget figures. At that time it was around \$14 billion.

**CHAIR:** We will go to questions from government members. Minister, with reference to page 22 of the SDS about Economic Development Queensland's role in facilitating the availability of affordable housing across the state, will you update the committee on EDQ's role in supporting the proposed declaration of a priority development area in Waraba in Caboolture West?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the member for the question. I know that the member is committed, as we all are in the Miles government, to using every lever at our disposal to address the housing supply and affordability issues being experienced not only in his electorate but right across Australia. Priority development areas are one of the most powerful tools for delivering affordable housing. They provide



a place-based and streamlined development assessment process. As at 31 March 2024, development approvals for 62,355 dwellings have been issued across the state's 35 PDAs. I am advised that a combination of over 63½ thousand completed dwellings and new home lots have been delivered to 31 March 2024.

I am pleased to advise the committee that Economic Development Queensland, EDQ, have been working with the Moreton Bay Council, Unitywater and state agencies on the planning framework for Waraba. Today I can announce that my intention is to declare Waraba as the state's newest priority development area. The Miles government's Homes for Queenslanders plan is all about delivering more housing supply across the state. The new 3,000-hectare Waraba PDA will help achieve this by facilitating a faster and more efficient rollout of around 30,000 new lots and homes for around 70,000 people, which I believe is around the size of one of our major coastal towns. This will also provide opportunities for an estimated 17,000 local jobs in well-planned retail, industrial and commercial activity centres. I appreciate the letter of support for the declaration from the Moreton Bay Council mayor, Peter Flannery. I think it is very important that we engage the councils in this and that they come along with us. I confirm that the Miles government is committed to significant up-front infrastructure investment to facilitate Waraba's development. This includes \$100 million from the recently signed SEQ City Deal.

Crucially, from day one the Miles government will also ensure the PDA delivers a wide variety of housing options, with the interim land use plan, ILUP, to require that 25 per cent of all dwellings be delivered as a mix of affordable and social housing. Once the PDA is declared and the ILUP is introduced, EDQ will develop a PDA-wide land use and infrastructure plan in consultation with the Moreton Bay Council, the community, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning, the Department of Transport and Main Roads and other stakeholders. Today's announcement will give the development industry the certainty it needs to confidently invest and build in Waraba. As Waraba is the state's 36th PDA, it builds on the work we are doing to ensure we can meet housing requirements going forward.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, my question is with reference to page 3 of the SDS. Could you please provide an update on the government's efforts to establish a domestic sustainable aviation fuel capability in Queensland?

**Ms GRACE:** Thank you, member. It is a great question. This is one of those exciting, future industries projects. It will be the first in Australia to manufacture sustainable aviation fuels. I know that the member represents a community with strong ties to the sugar industry, which will provide a critical feedstock for the production of sustainable aviation fuel, SAF. Here in Queensland we are leading the nation when it comes to the SAF industry, producing cleaner, greener fuel backed by our new industry development strategy, our 10-year bioenergy roadmap and action plan and our \$415.5 million Industry Partnerships Program. Through IPP we supported Jet Zero Australia with \$760,000 for a feasibility study. They have since leveraged that support to attract significant investment from partners like Qantas, Airbus industries and the Japanese industrial giant Idemitsu Kosan. Jet Zero has now announced its intention to establish a SAF processing facility in the Townsville region.

The Miles government can play a key role in supporting emerging industries like biofuels to secure early-stage investment from the private sector. When I recently met with them, I heard that the government's support and their ability to have the government stand with them in developing this strategy is a key indicator for a lot of these businesses to come on board. This benefit is often undervalued. Today, I pleased to announce that we are supporting both Wagner Sustainable Fuels and Liquid Power with grants of \$760,000 each. This is a total of \$1.2 million for feasibility studies to develop the case for investment in their own SAF proposal. We will become the SAF capital of Australia.

I am also pleased to announce that an industry partnership project with Energreen Nutrition Australia will establish a new \$22 million multiseed processing facility at Emerald in Central Queensland, creating 60 direct, new jobs and additional supply chain jobs for local Queensland businesses. Energreen's new facility will produce seed for the food-processing industry and crush novel crops like pongamia to supply the SAF and biofuels industry. This builds on other work the Miles government is doing including working with Ampol to investigate the production of renewable diesel—and I am really excited about that for some of our farmers—and SAF at its Lytton refinery in Brisbane. It is predicted the Australian SAF industry will be worth \$3 billion per annum by 2030 and will support 15,600 jobs, mostly in regional areas. This represents a substantial share of an estimated world industry value of \$23 million.

Queensland is internationally recognised as one of the best locations to establish a SAF supply chain because it already produces significant SAF feedstock such as waste materials from the sugar industry. Our nation-leading efforts are reflected in the decisions of investors, for example, the first

project Qantas supported as part of its \$400 million Climate Fund in the Jet Zero Townsville SAF biorefinery. Having been with them recently, I can say they are very excited about this. We do not just want a seat at the sustainable aviation fuel table; we want to be at the head of the table.

The Miles government is building on Queensland's strengths to support the jobs of the future. I thank the Premier for all the work that he did when he was state development minister in making sure that this becomes a reality in Queensland.

**Mr BROWN:** Minister, with reference to page 21 of the SDS, can you please provide an update to the committee on the steps taken by EDQ to increase the supply and affordability of housing in Queensland?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the member for the question. I know he appreciates the importance of the Miles government's record Homes for Queenslanders plan to help ensure every Queenslanders has a safe, secure and affordable place to call home. EDQ has a major role to play in increasing housing supply, as I have said previously. I am extremely pleased to announce today that following a market tender process Brisbane Housing Company—and, as we know, it was started by the state government with an 80-20 spread between the state government and the Brisbane City Council—has been selected as a preferred proponent for the delivery of 201 social and affordable homes at Northshore Hamilton and they have submitted their PDA application. It is very exciting to start on those large-scale 201 social and affordable homes. I can also update the committee that following a market tender process we are finalising agreements with preferred proponents for social and affordable housing developments delivering 150 homes at the Carseldine Village and 780 homes at Lumina in Southport, including around 160 affordable homes.

On 1 July the amendments I introduced to the EDQ Act came into force. These place a focus on EDQ to drive the delivery of social, affordable and diverse housing across the state. They are working with the private sector to facilitate and accelerate land supply and housing, incorporating social and affordable housing within EDQ-led projects, establishing targets for social and affordable housing outcomes in PDAs like the soon-to-be-established Waraba—and we are out to consultation on the Woolloongabba one—and investigating state owned parcels of land with the potential to deliver large-scale social and affordable housing.

Through these amendments EDQ expect to develop at least 3,700 homes within their own projects and for around 29,000 homes to be approved across the state in soon to be 36 PDAs over the next five years. This is 1,300 more homes developed by EDQ and roughly double the number of approvals within PDAs than would have been possible without these changes. To support EDQ in its ongoing program of investigations into potential housing sites, we have also provided them with \$7.5 million in funding over two years from 2023-24 to carry out this work.

We continue to deliver. The Miles government is committed to our ambitious Homes for Queenslanders plan backed by a record investment. Queenslanders deserve nothing less.

**CHAIR:** We will now go to the opposition for 15 minutes worth of questions before we go to the crossbench.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Can I ask the Coordinator-General to come to the table again please? I refer to an article published on 29 September 2022 titled "‘Bigger than Cross River Rail’: Premier puts \$12b price on pumped hydro site". You have indicated to the committee you are going to get the figures for us. In those preliminary discussions has anyone put a figure to you?

**Mr Coggan:** I thank the member for the question. I have not had direct preliminary discussions with Queensland Hydro. My office has and I have sought advice from my office.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Industry experts have told us that the price tag has probably gone from \$12 billion as announced to over \$20 billion.

**CHAIR:** Can you verify that?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am not going to disclose whistleblowers in front of a committee.

**CHAIR:** Hang on. You are throwing around figures. If you are saying something here you have to verify it.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Okay, Mr Chair. Let me put this question. The *Brisbane Times* article in which the then premier announced the \$12 billion price tag—here is the article. However, the same premier also announced the Gabba was going to be a billion dollars, so I am not sure if the government can even verify it, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** That is not verifying it. Member for Kawana—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, I said industry experts have advised the opposition.

**Ms GRACE:** Verify it.

**CHAIR:** Verify it.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am not going to disclose whistleblowers to this committee. They are protected and I am not going to do it. I am simply asking the question: how much is the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme going to cost Queenslanders? It seems no-one in the government can tell us.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, I am asking you to verify it. You have thrown out a figure in estimates and you cannot verify it.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I have told you, Mr Chair, that I am not going to disclose whistleblowers and there is legislation around not disclosing whistleblowers.

**CHAIR:** Okay, let me cut through this. You have mentioned some figures. You cannot verify them. I am going to allow the Coordinator-General to answer the question but he has a large degree of flexibility in how he chooses to do that.

**Mr Coggan:** I thank the member for the question. As I have previously answered, my office has had conversations with Queensland Hydro and I have sought some advice from my office.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You will get back to the committee, thank you. Minister, why is Caboolture West a PDA now and why has it not been a PDA any time over the last 10 years that the Labor government have been in power? We now have a housing crisis. The Labor government could have declared Caboolture West a PDA. Why is it only now that it has done so? It seems like it is a desperate attempt by a long-term Labor government to win an election rather than to actually deal with a housing crisis.

**CHAIR:** Member, you have asked your question. You did not need to throw in that argumentative part. Minister, I have given you latitude to answer this question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The question is: why now; why not during the last 10 years? Why now?

**CHAIR:** We have your question, member for Kawana.

**Ms GRACE:** I am the minister now and we have done the work. We have the support of the local government.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Steven Miles did not do it because he was a terrible minister.

**CHAIR:** Order.

**Ms GRACE:** We have done all the preliminary work that we need. This is just a silly line of questioning.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Throw Miles under the bus.

**CHAIR:** Order, member for Kawana. Cease your interjections.

**Ms GRACE:** If you want to talk about behaviour, please modify yours. As noted earlier when I announced my intention to declare Waraba a PDA, we have a very exciting project that will be declared. We have been doing the work that we needed to do. I welcome the support from the mayor Peter Flannery in regards to this. I am advised that EDQ, as master developer, has created development-ready land that can support over 12,000 dwellings and to date 7,500 dwellings are either under—sorry, this just says master developer.

Generally I can say the assessment timeframes have all been completed. I am very proud to do it. It is one of 35. It will become our 36th PDA. I do not accept the premise of the question. The government has promoted PDAs. They have been very successful. We have 36 of them around the state. EDQ has done an excellent job and we are now in a position to declare the Waraba PDA as our 36th in the state and we are very proud to do that.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** AVJennings have stopped 2,300 homes being built there. Can I please call the EDQ CEO to the table?

**CHAIR:** Sorry, was that your question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, I have requested the EDQ CEO to come to the table, please.

**Ms GRACE:** Can I respond to that to say that obviously developers make economic decisions for all kinds of reasons and to throw out a derogatory comment like that I think is totally unnecessary.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Good morning, Ms McNamara. I refer to documentation released in an RTI between Carolyn Evans and Andrew Fraser. One of the text messages says—

Just received a call from Debbie at EDQ.

This is about Griffith accommodation. The text continues—

Appears Housing Summit has identified the old Mount Gravatt student accommodation as possible short-term solution. Government keen to discuss, possibly making an announcement the next day.

**Ms McNamara:** can you advise the committee who requested you to phone Andrew Fraser about using the Griffith uni accommodation for housing accommodation, please?

**Ms McNamara:** Thank you for the question, member. To correct that, I did not make a call to Andrew Fraser.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Who did you communicate with at Griffith uni about this?

**Ms McNamara:** Economic Development Queensland and Griffith uni have engaged for the last couple of years on a semiregular basis because we have shared interests across a number of property estates. For example, we are both strategic partners down at the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct. My engagement with Griffith uni is predominantly with Peter Bryant.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** How much money has been spent on that proposal to date, please?

**Ms McNamara:** To date, the expenditure for considering the student accommodation project is \$1.429 million.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** So \$1.429 million, and am I correct in saying that the project is not proceeding?

**Ms McNamara:** In terms of it being adaptively re-used for crisis accommodation, if that is your interpretation of the project proceeding, then the answer is that you are correct: it is not proceeding.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Yet \$1.429 million has been spent. There is some concern I have in that I have been down there recently. There is still fencing around. The state government's signs are all up. It is in limbo. Who has control of that site at the moment? Does EDQ still have it or does Griffith uni have it?

**Ms McNamara:** In December 2022 the state government through EDQ entered into an access licence arrangement with Griffith University and at that point we took possession of the site. The purpose of that access licence arrangement was to conduct a range of investigations into the premises and the site and undertake the due diligence to work through the scope that would be required to bring that property back into use. The terms of that access licence remain on foot and we have a responsibility for that site, and we are currently working with Griffith on the orderly transition of the site back to Griffith uni.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** How much is that going to cost?

**Ms McNamara:** As I said, the cost to date is \$1.429 million, which includes the costs of securing the site up to today.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Yes, but my question is to now transition it back to Griffith. What are you estimating the cost is going to be for government to transition it to back to Griffith?

**Ms McNamara:** We are still working through those works and that scope and what an orderly transition of work looks like to agree that with Griffith University.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Do you have an estimate?

**Ms McNamara:** Not with me here, no.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Can you get it? Surely, work has been done.

**Ms McNamara:** I will refer to the minister.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You can come back to the committee with a figure by the end of the committee, if you like.

**Ms GRACE:** You are asking for an estimate. I am not sure if there is one. In terms of any work that we have done, I think Griffith is handing that site back to us in 2025-26. They already announced that in 2022, so it will come back to the government at that time.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I get that, but my question was actually to the—thank you, Minister—EDQ CEO. You have told the committee, though, that there is going to be expenditure obviously between now and when it is returned back to Griffith. Has EDQ done any work to estimate the costs of that?

**Ms McNamara:** We have been working with Griffith to have an understanding of what an orderly transition would look like. Your question to me was whether I have a number here today and I do not have that number. My understanding is that for me to provide that number to you I have to defer to the minister to seek her agreement if I am able to provide it.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** So you may not have the number, but there is a number? Someone in the department has a number?

**Ms GRACE:** We will do the work to find it and come back.

**Ms McNamara:** Okay; thank you.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Okay.

**Ms GRACE:** If there is one.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Why was due diligence not done by EDQ? I understand that it was stopped because of bushfire risks, but anyone who knows Griffith uni accommodation and goes down there knows there are big, tall trees around it, so the risk of bushfire was always in existence. Why did EDQ not do due diligence before an announcement was made to turn that into accommodation?

**Ms McNamara:** I am not placed to comment on the sequence of events. What I can comment on is the scope of the due diligence that we undertook. I cannot comment on the timing of an announcement versus when that work was undertaken. In terms of the due diligence that was undertaken, as I mentioned, we entered into a site access arrangement at the end of that year. The work that we undertook was not only in terms of the location—and you are right in that there is significant bushland surrounding the campus—but also in relation to understanding the nature of the built form. That student accommodation had been in operation until 2021 but they were properties that dated back to the sixties, so we had to gain access to the facilities to understand the nature of those buildings, and that is part of the due diligence which can only be undertaken once we had arrangements in place to access the premises.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Had EDQ done any work on this before you were told to just get this going, and who in government told you that this was the government's position?

**Ms McNamara:** As I mentioned earlier in my statements, we continue and at the time had regular conversations with Griffith uni around a number of property assets. We had been in discussion with them around the Mount Gravatt campus. As the minister has mentioned, Griffith uni have made it public, though they have not started the formal process, announcing their intentions to vacate Mount Gravatt in late 2025 or early 2026, so we had been engaging with Griffith uni in relation to the wider campus.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Ms McNamara, with respect to the Northshore Hamilton PDA, my understanding is that it is going to be an athletes village but, as well, the government have announced that before the Olympic and Paralympic Games and before it is turned into an athletes village it will be used for accommodation purposes to deal with the housing crisis we have. I have two questions for you before my time runs out. If people are moved into those properties in the athletes village before the Olympic and Paralympic Games, how do those people who are in those homes get moved out? Secondly, I have been told that in an athletes village they are not allowed to have kitchens in their facilities. Is the government going to have to take out the kitchens and then reinstall them after the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and what happens to the people who have been booted out of those homes to make way for the athletes in the Olympic and Paralympic Games?

**CHAIR:** There are a lot of hypotheticals in that question. Ms McNamara, feel free to answer that broadly with what information you do have and ignore the hypothetical part of it.

**Ms McNamara:** Okay. Thank you for the question, member. Hamilton Northshore has been confirmed as the location for the Brisbane athletes village to support the games in 2032. Our current projections are that there will be approximately 2,000 dwellings brought forward to support both the Olympics and the Paralympic Games. Our initial planning and scoping of that will look to bring forward dwellings of multiple different types. If you can imagine bringing forward 2,000 dwellings, they cannot be all of the same type of dwelling, so we will be looking to bring forward private, affordable, social, build-to-rent, retirement, aged-care, hotel as well as short-term accommodation. Within those different housing types, some will have kitchens; others will not. You are correct in that the traditional approach that has been adopted for games prior to Brisbane is that when private dwellings are built, like apartment buildings, kitchens are not installed in the lead-up to the games because there is a centralised food service put in place for Olympians and Paralympians. In terms of the sequence, that is the approach that has been adopted by games in the past.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Ms McNamara, the first point of the question was what happens to the people who move into those homes for housing affordability purposes. Do they get kicked out during the Olympic and Paralympic Games and how do they get back?

**Ms McNamara:** Our current planning is not currently looking at a model where we would support the temporary use of those types of apartment buildings to then be reallocated back into games mode prior to being reallocated back into private market housing.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Temporary use: people will move into these units and then have to move out for the athletes or you are building these 2,000 units and possibly some will be left vacant?

**Ms McNamara:** I am sorry if I am not answering the question, member. What I am saying is that we are currently not planning to use the constructed dwellings for temporary accommodation, to then transfer into games mode, to then transfer into permanent mode.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** So they are going to be built and then be vacant?

**Ms McNamara:** Yes, but they will be built in the lead-up to 2032.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** When the government announced this PDA on that area through EDQ, they announced that the homeless and those struggling with the cost of living and affordability issues with housing would be utilising those properties but you are now saying that will not be the case.

**Ms McNamara:** It is currently not our strategy. What we are doing to support the current housing need is bringing forward land that is not allocated to the Brisbane athletes village for development for social and affordable, both through a CHP partner, as has been announced this morning, as well as through privately-led affordable accommodation.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, another broken promise on housing. The housing crisis gets worse.

**CHAIR:** Member, you got the answer to your question. You may not have liked it but you got it.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I do not like anything about this Labor government.

**CHAIR:** Member for Traeger, do you have a question?

**Mr KATTER:** Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, is the volume of copper production in the north-west important to underpin the vision put forward by the federal and state governments and the expansion of critical minerals to underpin those infrastructure projects planned for there?

**Ms GRACE:** I am sorry, member: could you repeat the question? I am not understanding the question.

**Mr KATTER:** Is the volume of copper production considered important to underpin large projects such as CopperString and the likes in the north-west, in terms of keeping that viable to align with the vision of the state and the federal governments?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the member for the question. Although I am not the resources minister, I would anticipate that all our critical minerals are very important for our Big Build. Obviously, copper is an important component in relation to it. I am not an engineer to say how much is required. I understand we have the necessary materials in order to do that.

Of course, it is an important part. We welcome our copper mines. I know of the decision made at Mount Isa. As you know, member for Traeger, we are working earnestly with the local community and with the company on a transition plan. Of course, all our critical minerals are important. I have visited some new industries. With vanadium, for example, a mine will be opening up. There is an initial investment of \$800 million that will be crucial to our renewable energy program and our vanadium flow batteries, which are being developed here in Queensland for the future of our energy supply.

**Mr KATTER:** Given that it is important, Minister, have you or are you intending to speak with your colleague the mines minister to look at the options? There are purchasers who are wanting to continue operating that copper mine and keep it viable. Have you spoken with or are you intending to speak with the mines minister to explore those options?

**Ms GRACE:** Member for Traeger, I know there are a number of options on the table in relation to that. I have not specifically spoken to the minister. We have been concentrating on rolling out our support package in relation to that. I am sure that that is something that is on the table. When the resources minister requires my assistance with any of that, I am sure he will come to me. We can—through the director-general and through the department if it is required for state development, or the Coordinator-General—be part of that. They will come to us when we know that and we will, obviously, do all we can to ensure that we can assist to get that happening.

**Mr KATTER:** I hope so.

**Ms GRACE:** That has not happened to date—at this point in time—if that is what you are asking, member.

**Mr KATTER:** It is a two-part question. I appreciate that you answered both parts.

**Ms GRACE:** I think that you are aware that the support package is around \$50 million at the moment. We are working with you and others in the community to roll that out.

**Mr KATTER:** I appreciate that.

**Ms GRACE:** Obviously, if there are opportunities—and I know they change from day to day—I would be more than happy and my director-general, and our Coordinator-General if it is going to be a major project, will be more than happy to assist wherever it is required.

**Mr KATTER:** Minister, one of the big projects in the Traeger electorate is the Big Rocks Weir. I know it comes under the responsibility of the water minister. It is arguably one of the most significant projects in that region. The council has recently handed it back to the state in frustration because of the red tape and bureaucracy. Is there any intention from the state and from you or your department to look at that and acknowledge that it is perhaps a big problem that, after four years, a relatively small weir has not been able to progress?

**Ms GRACE:** Member for Traeger, thank you for the question. I am not aware at the moment whether my director-general has had this referred to us or not. I think you are right that it would be under the Minister for Water. I know that they are working on that. We want to deliver that weir. There has been a commitment made there. If you do not mind, I can ask my director-general to update in case he has had discussions at director-general level.

**Mr KATTER:** I guess it is clear that there is a carryover of the portfolios because a lot of development in the region relies on that water. It cannot go ahead without that weir.

**Ms GRACE:** We understand. Director-General, do you have anything to add?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, member, for the question. I am aware that Big Rocks Weir has recently come back into the state's sphere for discussion. It has not been raised with me yet through the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water but I am certainly happy to have a conversation with them in regards to that.

**Ms GRACE:** In effect, we have a bit of a watching brief. The DG is aware and we are aware that the council has now pulled out. I think it is a big project for the council. I think, rightly, there is someone who can deliver that. We will, and the director-general, as soon as we are requested. It is primarily, if you wish to ask, for the Minister for Water when he is before estimates.

**Mr KATTER:** To be clear on the first question, and I think you answered this, do you see a role for state development if there is a pathway forward for another operator to come in and operate that mine?

**Ms GRACE:** Only if required, member. If they come to us and say, 'We need the support of state development or the Coordinator-General to advance this or to make this happen', we are always there to assist the agencies in regards to major projects of that nature. Resources is very well equipped and they can probably facilitate this, but we are always there should they require assistance—absolutely, no problems.

**CHAIR:** We are starting to run out of time and we have had only three questions from government members so we will come back to us. Minister, with reference to page 21 of the SDS, can you provide an update to the committee on the role that EDQ plays in making the Bluey's World experience centre a reality? That is more of a question from my daughter, Arabella.

**Ms GRACE:** I thought it might have been. I was going to ask if that was your question or from one of your children. I thank the member for the question. I know the member is a huge Bluey fan, as I am and I do not even have children. I know how excited he is to take his three children along to meet Bluey and all her friends. The home of the 2032 Brisbane athletes village, the riverfront of Northshore Hamilton, is already well on its way to becoming Brisbane's most connected, sustainable and welcoming waterfront precinct thanks to the \$12 billion urban renewal program within the Northshore Hamilton Priority Development Area.

Just last month, we announced that Bluey's World—how exciting; it is amazing—will open there in November this year, attracting fans from all over the world to our fantastic state. The Bluey's team, Andrew Kay and Associates or AKA, began working closely with EDQ in September 2023 to find the perfect location to house the Bluey's World experience. As we know, the backdrop of Brisbane has been central to Queensland's global smash hit and Northshore is the perfect place to bring their world to life. A preferred location was agreed. A commercial agreement was executed by EDQ and preliminary works commenced in May this year on the development of a purpose-built, state-of-the-art, 4,000-square-metre venue.

This amazing project is another demonstration of the strength of the relationships EDQ has developed across the arts and tourism industry. As master developer for much of Northshore Hamilton, EDQ have been central to the delivery of some of Brisbane's favourite places—and I was out there recently—such as Eat Street Northshore and Flipside Circus and major exhibitions, including Pink Flamingo, the Brisbane Festival, Brisbane Street Art Festival, Monet in Paris, Van Gogh Alive and *Kurios* by Cirque du Soleil.

EDQ is also attracting innovation to Northshore with Wheelhouse, a new cutting-edge co-working space, that is set to transform Northshore Brisbane and cultivate a thriving community of entrepreneurs and creatives. Back in April, I was proud to announce the commencement of construction for this \$5.9 million project by Bridgeman, a Queensland small and medium-sized enterprise, and Supply Nation, a certified Indigenous company. Bridgeman supports First Nations businesses and people and is using local contractors, manufacturers and supply chains for goods, services, materials and equipment.

There are many great things in store for Northshore Hamilton and the star power of our favourite blue heeler further brightens its future. I actually cannot wait to see Bluey's World.

**CHAIR:** The member for Capalaba has a quick question.

**Mr BROWN:** With reference to page 3 of the SDS and the work of the Office of the Coordinator-General, can the minister describe how the Coordinator-General is facilitating the delivery of the CopperString 2032 project?

**Ms GRACE:** That is a great question. As we know, the Miles government is delivering on its commitment to the CopperString 2032 project and the commencement of works at the workers camp at Hughenden earlier this month, as approved by the Queensland Coordinator-General. The CopperString project is vital to Queensland's transition to a low-emissions future and represents an essential part of Queensland's SuperGrid backbone, to be delivered under the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, and I take into account the member for Traeger's comments in relation to what this will do to open up our critical minerals.

CopperString is, roughly, a 1,000 kilometre high-voltage transmission line that will connect Mount Isa to the SuperGrid for the first time. The \$5 billion project will deliver an estimated 750 FTE jobs during construction and around 30 FTE ongoing operational jobs. It will provide a more reliable source of power into the region and enable renewable projects to export into the grid. It will also provide legacy benefits for regional communities beyond the construction of the project. For example, faster internet is already underway through the government owned Queensland Capacity Network.

On 9 July, the Premier, Deputy Premier and Minister for Energy and Clean Economy Jobs turned the sod on the construction of the Hughenden workers camp—the first and largest required, housing up to 550 people at its peak. I have also recently declared the CopperString 2032 project a prescribed project and a critical infrastructure project. This means that the Coordinator-General can ensure there are no unreasonable delays to approvals that would impact project delivery and can also expedite resolution of matters relating to trunk infrastructure and land tenure.

The Miles government is committed to a brighter, cleaner future for Queensland. The CopperString project will help unlock Australia's largest renewable energy zone and more than \$500 billion in new critical minerals to support our Energy and Jobs Plan—Queensland's pathway to a clean, reliable and affordable energy system. Meanwhile, there is an obvious alternative, which we are certainly not having a bar of—that is, nuclear energy. We believe our future is in renewables. This is a fantastic piece of infrastructure to ensure that that occurs. The Miles government is getting on with the job of delivering the CopperString project today and the clean energy jobs of the future based on renewables, not nuclear.

**CHAIR:** If we have time, we will go to the member for Maiwar. There are two things that we need to chase up: the estimated cost of Pioneer Valley hydro and the estimated cost of returning property assets to Griffith. Do we have any of that information?

**Ms GRACE:** The Queensland jobs and energy plans released in 2022 provided a preliminary cost for the proposed Pioneer-Burdekin project of \$12 billion. I think that has been mentioned. No further update has been provided to the Coordinator-General from Queensland Hydro, and I believe that work is done. That question could be put to the Minister for Energy and Clean Economy Jobs when he is before estimates.

**CHAIR:** I know the member for Maiwar has a question for the director of EDQ. Member for Maiwar, you have one minute.



**Mr BERKMAN:** My question relates to the Walker Corporation's Toondah Harbour proposal, which I am sure you are aware was withdrawn from the EPBC approvals process after its proposed refusal. Under the development agreement signed in 2016, and any other related deeds of variation, what obligations does the government have to allow Walker Corporation exclusive development rights on land within the Toondah Harbour PDA? Is there anything in that development agreement that prohibits the government from revoking or amending the PDA?

**Ms McNamara:** I thank the member for the question. Could you repeat the first part for me?

**Mr BERKMAN:** Does the development agreement, or any deeds of variation, provide Walker group with an ongoing, exclusive right to development of the Toondah Harbour PDA?

**Ms McNamara:** Thank you, member, for the question. The development agreement was entered into between Economic Development Queensland, the Walker group, Redlands City Council and Redland Investment Corporation. The development agreement remains on foot. The terms of that agreement dictate the way in which that development is brought forward. Within the terms of that agreement, there are certain components that Walker has to adhere to to bring forward the development in the Toondah Harbour. That is how I would characterise the terms of the development agreement.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, we have run out of time. Did you have a quick comment?

**Mr BERKMAN:** The second limb of that question was specifically whether there is anything in that development agreement that prohibits the government from revoking or amending the PDA.

**Ms McNamara:** The management of the PDA, which is a regulatory function under EDQ, is a separate function that we deliver which is governed under the terms of the Economic Development Act.

**CHAIR:** That concludes the committee's examination of estimates for—

**Ms GRACE:** Chair, can I just interrupt for one minute, please?

**CHAIR:** Yes, certainly.

**Ms GRACE:** I think the director-general just wants to provide an update to an answer.

**Mr Fraine:** Member, I just want to clarify one point in earlier conversations around contractors. At one point, you mentioned consultants. Just for the sake of my being clear, \$609,000 was spent this financial year on consultancies as opposed to the numbers I was talking about for contractors. I do not want to confuse anyone.

**CHAIR:** That concludes the committee's examination of estimates for the state development portfolio area.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of infrastructure, including Olympic and Paralympic Games infrastructure, open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

We will now go to questions.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I have a question for the director-general in relation to the infrastructure space for the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme. When the project was first announced in 2022, a figure of \$12 billion was mentioned. Do you have an updated figure? Has anyone advised you on an updated figure for the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. No, I do not have an updated figure for that project. That is subject to further work that is being done by Queensland Hydro.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, the Coordinator-General could not tell us a figure. The department of infrastructure does not have a figure. This is a project with preliminary costings of \$12 billion and you are telling this committee that you do not know if the \$12 billion is still \$12 billion or if it has increased. The cost of the Borumba Pumped Hydro project has increased billions over the last two years since it was announced. Are you telling the committee that you have no idea what the estimated 2024 cost is for the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. I am telling the committee that a preliminary figure of \$12 billion was provided for that project. It is undergoing a due diligence process, and there will no doubt be an updated figure from that process.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Has the infrastructure department, your department, done any calculations as to what the updated figure is?

**Mr Fraine:** That is a project that is being led in that due diligence process through Queensland Hydro and through its connection back into the Department of Energy and Climate.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** So the department of infrastructure has no communication about this project with the other departments? I would have thought the department of infrastructure would have been participating in these discussions.

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. We do, obviously as the department that is involved across the infrastructure pipeline, maintain contact with those agencies doing this work, but asset classes and the work on those asset classes are led by the relevant agencies and their associated bodies.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, at a recent Senate inquiry you advised that you could not remember who told you to investigate the use of the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre, QSAC, for the Brisbane 2032 athletic events. Have you remembered yet?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. In regard to QSAC and to answer the member's question, during the sports review the reviewers requested information on a range of venues. This included a request for any previous consideration relating to QSAC, the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre. The reviewers also requested additional information and analysis on a number of venues including QSAC.

In coming to the point of your question, member, as per the terms of reference, the panel was aware that it could provide information on early findings or outcomes for government consideration ahead of submission of the final report and, indeed, as Graham Quirk has stated, this is what they did. In line with this, they provided an update particularly around discussions on the Gabba and alternatives. We started preparing material for government to consider informing its response as this progressed. As part of this, the director-general of DPC asked for information on upgrading QSAC that had been considered by the reviewers. This was provided and this was used by government in response to the review recommendations.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, in reference to my question, when you were at the Senate estimates and you were asked who told you to look at QSAC and you could not recall, your recollection now is that it was Mike Kaiser, the Director-General of DPC. Is that correct?

**CHAIR:** That is a very big hypothetical and there is an inference there.

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair: the director-general said that.

**CHAIR:** I have not finished speaking. Did you want to rephrase that question without the argumentative part or the hypothetical part, member for Kawana?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, you have just said that the director-general of DPC contacted you. Was that Mike Kaiser?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. As I have stated, as we were pulling together the government's response in regard to the advice that the panel was giving us around where their recommendations would ultimately be, I was or we as a department were contacted by Mike, the DG of DPC, in regard to providing information regarding QSAC.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** This is the same Mike Kaiser, the director-general, who said yesterday that no analysis was conducted at all on the \$1 billion expenditure announcement of the Gabba? This is the same Mike Kaiser who made that announcement yesterday?

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, I do not know even why you asked that question. You already have the answer to that.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We are talking about billions of dollars of expenditure.

**CHAIR:** Would you like another question?

**Mr SMITH:** Do you want to question his driver's licence?

**CHAIR:** Let me handle this. Member, would you like another question or perhaps rephrase that one entirely?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No. Queenslanders are very embarrassed by what the government has done with the Olympic and Paralympic Games. I have lots of questions on it.

**CHAIR:** No. I did not ask that.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, for clarity, did the department make a recommendation to the government that it was the best option to proceed with QSAC?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. The government has provided a clear outcome in regard to the recommendations from the review panel around accepting 27 of the 30 recommendations. That is roughly 90 per cent of the recommendations. There were obviously concerns that the government has expressed in regard to the recommendations made around Victoria Park. On that basis, government has asked the department to undertake a project validation report into QSAC.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, you have just made a point that the project validation report is occurring now. What work did the department do to ensure QSAC was the best option? Certainly in the media there have been lots of issues raised about QSAC, particularly about transportation—getting people and athletes to and from there. Why would the project validation report or due diligence not have occurred by the department to make a recommendation to government before the announcement was made?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. As I mentioned earlier, during the course of the review, the panel asked for consideration of both any previous analysis that had been done of QSAC and, indeed, asked for some additional analysis that they could consider in regard to that. That provides a basis for consideration of what will go into investigation in the PVR. The work that will be done on the PVR to the points that you mentioned around transport, around environment, around podium cost—which has also had some discussion in media circles—is all within the scope of the work to be done in the PVR, which, indeed, is why the PVR is undertaken.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** What other options were considered as part of the department's review of QSAC?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. Within the options provided for QSAC, the options around QSAC are as they are. That is what is being investigated through the PVR process.

**Mr HART:** Announce due diligence later.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** So the government has made the announcement.

**Ms GRACE:** Which you agree with.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Due diligence is happening after the announcement is made. What is the department's plan if the project validation report says, 'QSAC is not validated'?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. Starting with the front of the question, the request that the department has dealt with from government is to investigate QSAC which is the purpose of a PVR. Indeed, depending on the outcomes of that, there will be further consideration given to options at that point. That is speculation at this time.

**Mr HART:** There is no plan B.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, do you agree with Mike Kaiser's comments yesterday that there was absolutely no analysis done on the Gabba when the \$1 billion announcement was made by former premier Annastacia Palaszczuk and former minister Steven Miles?

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, are you asking for an opinion?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, I am not. I am asking if he agrees. It is a yes or no.

**CHAIR:** I think you are asking for an opinion, but I am going to let the director-general answer that with a degree of flexibility.

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. That is before my involvement in this portfolio or in the games themselves, so I do not have an opinion on the \$1 billion that was originally come up with.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Did the infrastructure department do any cost analysis of the Gabba when it was originally announced at \$1 billion?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. As I have stated, that is before my time. I am not aware of that. Certainly what the department has done is work around the project validation report that was done and released, but I am not in a position to comment on work done for that \$1 billion.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** What about the \$2.7 billion announcement of the Gabba? Did the department do any work on the \$2.7 billion when that was announced? It went from \$1 billion to \$2.7 billion. Did the department do any assessment or analysis on that announcement?

**Mr Fraine:** I thank the member for the question. In bringing together the intergovernmental agreement—again, it was before my time—I am aware there was consideration given to the full range of projects with regard to that, which was subsequently developed and worked on for the Gabba with regard to the PVR I mentioned in response to the previous question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, the director-general has said that the project validation on QSAC is now occurring, so the due diligence is happening after the government made the announcement on QSAC as the option for athletics. The director-general just said it is speculative; it is investigative. What happens if QSAC is not validated in the project validation report? When you announced this it was the final decision of government, but it appears now it is all over the shop.

**Mr SMITH:** Point of order, Chair: it is a hypothetical question about 'what if' happens.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** What is the plan B? The government has announced it. It is just bungle after bungle.

**CHAIR:** Members, cease the interjections. Returning to the point of order, there is a degree of hypothetical in the question but I am giving the minister latitude to answer that question.

**Ms GRACE:** There was preliminary work with regard to the cost of QSAC. I know that the vice-president of the IOC, John Coates, questioned the \$1 billion for the podium that was included in that. The review was only a 60-day review, so of course they are not going to do project validation reports. They can take anywhere between six and 12 months to complete. It is absolutely ludicrous to suggest that a project validation report or business case could have been done within that time. These are best estimates in relation to what we have. In the past when we did the intergovernmental agreement, what we found is that the work that was done in the costings for that—the \$7.1 billion—which needs to come under that funding envelope, is coming to fruition, for example, for the Sunshine Coast Stadium. They are around the plans that have been made then.

There has been no PVR on Victoria Park, either. I note that the opposition has supported all of the venues the government has said we will be going ahead with when it comes to the games. Depending on what occurs in the future, any government would have to look at what comes through a PVR. That is a normal course of action. To say that somehow you do not proceed down that track because of that is a nonsense, and that is exactly what we are getting. There is no PVR for Victoria Park. There is no PVR for the \$3.4 billion estimated in costs. In addition to that, the report stated on page 33—

Further work is also required to validate the cost estimates once a site location is identified within Victoria Park.

That is a bit of pie in the sky as well. It continues—

The cost of connections, plaza works and bridges will also—

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair: the question was not about alternatives. It was a very direct question.

**CHAIR:** It was indeed, but I have given the minister some latitude in answering the question.

**Ms GRACE:** The point I am making is that there are no PVRs for any other suggested sites—

**Mr HART:** So there is no plan B.

**Ms GRACE:**—in relation to this because there is not the time to do that. You make a decision on where you go based upon—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You have had three years.

**CHAIR:** Cease your interjections, member for Kawana.

**Ms GRACE:** The PVR for the Gabba was done. It was determined not to go ahead with that, and that was done over the three years. The point I am making is, as further stated in the report—

The cost of connections, plaza works and bridges will also need careful review and would typically sit outside an assessment of stadium cost.

At the moment, all of those connections, like we have with QSAC for the podium and whatever, are things that were not even brought into the cost of the actual stadium in Victoria Park, for example. These are situations that we need to look at. We also do not have a warm-up track in Victoria Park, which is a huge expense that came out of the government's Gabba PVR as well. You cannot have athletes competing in a stadium without a very close warm-up track to be able to go and compete in their sport. These are all still up in the air in relation to any alternative. We decided on QSAC in discussion. We are going through a PVR. We now have the independent authority. That is working through that. We stand by that decision. I know that the opposition has a secret plan to go to Victoria Park. They come out and say they support the government. They say they are—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, we do not—misleading the committee.

**CHAIR:** Cease your interjections, member.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Misleading the committee.

**Ms GRACE:**—supporting the government in relation to what we are doing. Let the PVR take its course, which is exactly what is happening.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, we received the news three years ago that the Olympic and Paralympic Games were awarded to Brisbane in 2032. Since then we have seen the Gabba announcement of a billion dollars. Then it was going to be knocked down at \$2.7 billion. Then there were estimates it was going to be \$3.4 billion. You have just said when QSAC was announced that was plan B after the Gabba, and now we are finding out from the department that it is speculative, it is still being investigated, and QSAC might not even be the final outcome. Do you accept, Minister, that Queenslanders are embarrassed by your government's handling of Olympic and Paralympic Games infrastructure in Queensland?

**CHAIR:** That question had a very long preamble and contained some hypothetical inferences, but I am sure the minister is able to answer it as she sees fit, once again with a degree of latitude.

**Ms GRACE:** I am very proud to be the minister to be delivering the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2032. We will never be embarrassed as a state for winning the games—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Queenslanders are embarrassed by you.

**CHAIR:** Member, cease your interjections.

**Ms GRACE:**—for putting in the foundations in relation to building a games that we will be proud of in 2032. I do not believe Queenslanders are embarrassed. These are the normal things that happen when you are looking at venues. You are looking at a funding envelope of \$7.1 billion. There were suggestions made in the 60-day review of a new stadium that would have put us outside of that funding envelope. The government went with the alternative, in consultation with the vice-president of the IOC. QSAC will be a facility that will give legacy to Queensland athletes. Most of the games in recent history put a track inside the stadium, and as soon as the games are over they rip the track out and there is no legacy. This will provide an amazing legacy for the athletes of Queensland. We are looking forward to delivering it. Of course, until a PVR is done, whether it is Victoria Park, whether it is the Gabba—was which completed—whether it is QSAC or whether it is the arena, that is the process we go through. That is under the intergovernmental agreement under the funding envelope of \$7.1 billion.

We are very proud of winning the games. We have put the foundations in place with all of the things we have done to date, including governance structures, the PVRs that have occurred, the 60-day review, setting a clear direction. The only people muddying the waters here are the opposition. We are very clear. We have not deviated one bit from what we announced following the 60-day review. The work is happening. We have put in the independent authority, which is doing its job as well. We have all of the governance, all of the infrastructure, in place. Like any great project, the foundations are the most important part. We are proud of what we have been able to build. With eight years to go, we are looking forward to 2032. Let me tell you: no-one is going to be embarrassed.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, the process you went through for the Gabba debacle is the same one you have used for QSAC; is that correct?

**CHAIR:** I am going to rule that out of order. Do you want to rephrase the question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, you have appeared to use exactly the same process—

**Ms GRACE:** No, that is incorrect.

**Mr BLEIJIE:**—that was gone through with the Gabba—a billion dollars to \$2.7 billion without any PVRs, without any due diligence—and now you have told the committee that you have not done any of the work with QSAC. You have done exactly what you did with the Gabba debacle—again!

**CHAIR:** Member, I am going to rule that question out of order as well. That was argumentative.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We are going to be at plan C. What is plan C, D, E, F, G, H, I?

**CHAIR:** Member, ceases your interjections. This is the third time I have told you to cease your interjections.

**Mr HART:** Point of order, Chair: can we have an explanation as to why you are ruling it out of order?

**CHAIR:** I am ruling it out of order because it is argumentative, it is hypothetical and it contains inferences.

**Mr HART:** You cannot rule it out of order just because you do not like the question, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Member, I already have. We will go to questions from the government. I will first go to the member for Capalaba.

**Ms GRACE:** You agree with it all.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, members.

**Ms GRACE:** You agree with it all.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We are going to set up an independent coordination authority which you should have done three years ago.

**Ms GRACE:** You agreed with it all.

**CHAIR:** Members! Cease!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** If you had, we would not be in the drama we have now.

**CHAIR:** Members!

**Ms GRACE:** You agree with it all.

**CHAIR:** Members!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Three years, you have had it.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, I have directed you four times to cease your interjections. Next time it is a warning. Can I please remind members that there are to be no arguments across the chamber. I go to the member for Capalaba.

**Mr BROWN:** With reference to SDS page 7 and its reference to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, will the minister update the committee on the progress of the games, including the activities of the legacy committee, and advise how the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games will provide long-lasting benefits for Queensland?

**Ms GRACE:** Thank you, member, for the question. We are only a few days away from the start of the Paris Olympics so it is a great opportunity to update the committee on the significant progress made so far to the lead-up. Having spoken to Andrew Liveris who is in Paris at the moment, I guess the one thing that has struck me with what is happening in Paris is the enormity of the security that is over there at the moment. Andrew mentioned the Green Beret and armed security people are virtually all over Paris on nearly every single corner. Security is a big issue for the Paris games and I hope everything goes extremely well for them. I know the Australian athletes were warned today about wearing their uniforms outside the village and to not go out alone and to be in pairs. Security is a really important part and they are the kinds of things we want to learn from attending the Paris games.

The Miles government has taken every step to ensure that Queensland is ready to put on a spectacular games under the IOC's New Norm—one that leaves a lasting legacy in communities right across the state. Already we have achieved so much—more than any other host city this far out from the opening ceremony—including setting up our legacy committee which has contributed to our excellent Elevate 2042 Legacy Strategy.

As part of our legacy work, today I am pleased to announce that we will be launching a new digital platform called Sport Venues Connect to promote top Queensland sporting venues to a national and global audience. We know that when international teams hold training camps and events in regional cities it has a great impact on the local community—for example, the PNG basketball team in Mackay ahead of the 2015 Pacific Games; the Canadian boxing team in Toowoomba before the 2018 Commonwealth Games; and the New Zealand hockey team in Cairns before the 2021 Tokyo Olympics. We get these international teams that want sporting venues and training facilities. We want our regional cities to secure more national and international sporting events and training camps in the lead-up to the games and beyond as part of the \$4.6 billion tourism and trade boost the games are projected to provide. Sport Venues Connect will promote Queensland's high-quality community and professional sporting facilities. It features an interactive map of over 50 international and national standard venues across the state that provide training and competition opportunities for more than 80 sports. This will be expanded over time. If any venues out there want to be added to the list, all they need to do is fill out their details online. It is a very comprehensive legacy piece over the years for our regional areas in Queensland.

From international amateur athletic foundation standard running tracks on the edge of the Great Barrier Reef at the Townsville Sports Precinct, to university sporting hubs across SEQ that cater for multiple teams, users can filter by sport, facility options or location and then directly liaise with those

venues. This builds on the great work that has already been happening ahead of 2032, especially in terms of getting the foundations and governance right. Let us remember that Sydney 2000 did not even have a master plan until five years out from their games.

We are really setting up. It is going to be a great legacy piece. It will utilise these facilities. It will bring national and international economic prosperity for those regional centres. It will deliver more economic activity and more jobs. All eyes will be on Queensland and our state will shine.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, I draw your attention to page 6 of the SDS and its reference to infrastructure sector productivity and workforce outcomes. Could you please update the committee on the release of the infrastructure productivity and workforce road map and action plan and advise how it will help respond to market capacity constraints and improve productivity?

**Ms GRACE:** That is a great question. We are proudly delivering our record Big Build right across the state. Honestly, with \$107 billion of infrastructure investment over the next four years alone, we are in an era of amazing advancement of Queensland.

Queensland's unprecedented population growth—which has been underestimated, as we know; people are moving here, and why wouldn't they because this is the state to be—has put significant pressure on the infrastructure industry at a time when the sector is already facing a number of challenges, including severe labour shortages. We know the challenges that are being faced in this area. The performance of the construction sector is critical to the success of Queensland's Big Build, our record Homes for Queenslanders plan, the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games and in supporting Queensland's growth in general. Today I am pleased to launch the joint industry-government Infrastructure Productivity and Workforce Roadmap and Action Plan to improve productivity and workforce outcomes within the construction sector.

The road map outlines five productivity and workforce levers with action against each: commercial—setting out best practice procurement practices; governance and framework—ensuring robust planning and business cases; innovation, digital and data—being innovative, using building information modelling and digital twins; skills and training—growing the workforce and future skills; and workforce wellbeing and diversity—improving inclusivity and diversity. From the action plan, I would like to highlight two key elements. The first is a pilot program in Cairns and surrounds where government agencies will further collaborate to grow local capacity to improve industry and government capability to deliver major projects. My department is working closely on the design of the pilot which should be ready for sign off in September with Queensland Health, the Department of Education, the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training and the Department of Housing, Local Government, Planning and Public Works. With regard to the infrastructure to be delivered in Cairns, it will be a coordination to ensure that we can meet the infrastructure needs as a pilot which can then be transferred into other areas of the state.

The second helps to accelerate the adoption of modern methods of construction on government infrastructure projects through the introduction of whole-of-government targets to use MMC in 50 per cent of projects by 2030. Modern methods of construction include the process of: offsite manufacturing of buildings; building components ahead of online assembly; and standardised designs by agencies with ongoing capital programs. This is something that is happening across government already but we want to see more of it and make it more consistent. These targets signal our government's ongoing commitment to increasing MMC solutions across our infrastructure program. Targets will also provide industry with the confidence to continue to invest, scale and grow in these MMCs. This work builds on the extensive support and investment the Miles government has already made to support the construction sector—having the pipeline of tradies needed, expanding our TAFE construction apprentices to over 25s, and obviously making sure we have the free TAFE so we can train the tradies and have the apprentices onsite. The government also works with the independent 11-member Jobs Queensland board to build, maintain, strengthen and collaborate relationships across government, industry, regions and communities.

I am really looking forward to the Cairns pilot. There is a lot of fantastic infrastructure happening right across the board with the expansion of our road map and action plan. We will continue to deliver vital infrastructure for our growing state.

**Mr BROWN:** With reference to the SDS on page 7 and also with reference to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, will the minister update the committee on the progress of the new Chandler Indoor Sports Centre and other precinct upgrades?

**Ms GRACE:** Thank you, member for Capalaba. I know how excited you were to join me at Chandler in May to see this \$257 million investment in the Chandler sports precinct, which is just a stone's throw away from your electorate. I know many of your constituents use the Chandler centre. We are still more than eight years away from the games and we are already getting ready to deliver amazing new and upgraded sports facilities under the IOC's New Norm. Obviously the IOC has a final say on sports and where they are held. I actually think Brett Clark put it the right way when we announced it was eight years out from our 2032 games. This is about building the venues and the OCOG puts on the show of all the sports when we know exactly what they are and delivers them like they are about to do in Paris.

We are looking forward to Chandler Sports Precinct playing an integral role in our home games, with the BMX Supercross track and international competition standard Anna Meares Velodrome earmarked to host Olympic and Paralympic track cycling and BMX racing. Those facilities are second to none. I know that when Andrew Liveris was with us he was amazed at how fantastic those venues already are, and we will make them even better. The Chandler Sports Precinct already sees more than 640,000 visits across the year and will become more popular, thanks to the addition of a massive new indoor sports centre. The new centre will feature two halls, one accommodating 10 multisport courts and the other a 2,400-square-metre gymnastics facility which, before and after the games, will be able to host a range of sports including basketball, volleyball, netball, badminton and gymnastics.

The Aquatic Centre, which recently hosted the Australian national team swimming trials, is proposed to host the Olympic artistic swimming, diving and water polo and Paralympic aquatics. Upgrades to the centre include improved equitable access, new seating, lighting and amenities, and upgrades to meet games competition requirements. Also included are site improvements throughout the precinct, providing improved equitable access. The renders are fantastic with regard to accessibility, lighting, a new green hub with gathering and meeting spaces and inter-building connectivity.

Having toured the site recently with OCOG President Andrew Liveris and you, member, I know that it will be an absolutely fantastic venue once completed. The expressions of interest are already out for the new indoor sports centre and precinct upgrades, and I am pleased to advise the committee that there has been strong interest from qualified and capable principal consultants and managing contractors, with short listings now complete and invitations to tender issued. The tenders will be awarded later this year and construction is due to start in 2025 and finish in 2027, meaning our high-performance athletes and the community can start using these new facilities years before the games even start.

By the end of 2024, the delivery authority is hoping to have nearly half of the \$1.87 billion minor venue contracts out, with others due in 2025. Like I said, we will put on a games that we are proud of, and the uplifts that these venues will be getting will be second to none. It will be an absolutely fantastic legacy for the people of Queensland.

**CHAIR:** We will go back to the opposition for a 20-minute block of questions.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, we have now ascertained that the Gabba redevelopment was plan A—a billion dollars, then went to \$2.7 billion. The government then announced plan B, which was QSAC for the athletics track. You have indicated to this committee that there are investigations being undertaken with QSAC now, that it is speculative. What is plan C?

**CHAIR:** You are being a bit argumentative. I am going to give the director-general a bit of latitude in—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am quoting the director-general.

**CHAIR:** Member, in the future, avoid the long preambles without the arguments and get straight to the question. Director-General, you have latitude in answering this.

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, and thank you, member, for the question. The speculation is beyond the current stage. We are, as we do and as we are doing for a range of other venues, undertaking project validation report work into QSAC. That is where the focus is at the moment.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Was that not the same process for the Gabba, though, with the announcement and then they did the due diligence afterwards and found out it did not stack up so they did not proceed? What happens if that occurs again and we are back at square one, despite having won the games three years ago?



**Mr Fraine:** I thank the member for the question. Where we are at is that the panel of the sports review looked at QSAC, suggested it would cost somewhere in the vicinity of \$1.6 billion and raised what they thought were pros and cons with it. Out of the government's consideration of that review, we are—and it now sits with the delivery authority—undertaking the work to do the project validation report, and that is the focus of our efforts at this point in time.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** If the project validation report does not stack up for QSAC, with all of the issues which have been raised publicly, the department have surely thought what is next. What advice would you give government then?

**Mr Fraine:** The advice that will be given to government will be provided at the time that the project validation report for QSAC has been undertaken.

**Mr HART:** We are running out of time, are we not?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, are the forecast costs for QSAC still \$1.6 billion, or has that been upgraded?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. As I have stated in response to previous questions, \$1.6 billion is the figure that was estimated out of the work of the sports review panel with the venues review panel. That is the amount that will be tested through the project validation report work that the delivery authority will undertake.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I put to you that the \$1.6 billion could be higher.

**Ms GRACE:** It could be lower.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It could be higher.

**Ms GRACE:** It could be lower.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Well, the Gabba was \$1 billion and went \$2.7 billion so, based on this government's record, I suspect it is going to be a lot higher.

**CHAIR:** Members, thank you very much for your interest in this matter. I direct you once again to the standing orders about arguing across the chamber. I am asking the director-general to answer that question, please.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, have there been any updated costs from the \$1.6 billion or is that still what the department envisages the QSAC project is going to cost?

**Mr Fraine:** No, there have not been further updated costs. That is the work that will be undertaken during the course of doing the project validation report.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** If you need the project validation report to confirm the costs, how did you get the costs in the first place—the \$1.6 billion? The concern for many Queenslanders is, as the Director-General of Premier and Cabinet, Mike Kaiser, said yesterday with the Gabba, there was no analysis done. Where did the \$1.6 billion come from for QSAC?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. As I have stated in response to previous questions, that \$1.6 billion was a cost that came out of the review panel and their report which they themselves acknowledged, during the costs of putting it together, would need to be tested, and that is what the project validation report will do.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** How much of that \$1.6 billion expenditure is for temporary structures at QSAC?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. If the minister is agreeable, we will look to get that number during the course of the hearing.

**Ms GRACE:** Yes, I am happy with that, but I think it was to do with the increased seating, but then the IOC pays for the temporary seating. If I could clarify, the IOC pays for the temporary seating. When there is a seating overlay, that is an expense of the IOC. We produce the venues, and then my understanding is that the IOC has a significant budget for temporary seating because they do not want to leave large stadiums that then need to be maintained, member.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** That raises a further question, Director-General. The \$1.6 billion does not include the temporary seating, the minister just said, so that will be on top of that?

**Mr Fraine:** Member, thank you for the question. That is what we will clarify.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you. Director-General, the government has also announced upgrades to Suncorp Stadium and Gabba. What are the costs for each and what are the upgrades actually doing? How much will they cost, both the Gabba and Suncorp Stadium?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. That is work that will be undertaken by the delivery authority, in line with the work that is being considered for QSAC.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Sorry, can you just repeat that?

**Mr Fraine:** Certainly. That is work that will be undertaken by the delivery authority, in line with the work they are doing on a number of other venues, including QSAC.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You are talking about the new coordination authority that has been recently set up?

**Mr Fraine:** Correct, member.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** But I understand the board has not yet been appointed?

**Mr Fraine:** That is correct. We are going through a recruitment process at this point in time, but the authority has been stood up from 1 July and has an interim CEO and staff undertaking work.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, how is it that you can tell the committee that the QSAC upgrade is \$1.6 billion, but you cannot say what the Gabba upgrade and Suncorp upgrade will be costing because that will be further work by a body that is not yet established?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. As I said in previous responses, the \$1.6 billion was the figure that the review panel estimated for QSAC which will be tested through the PVR process. That is not my number, as such. The review panel also suggested that certainly to keep the Gabba compliant there was somewhere in the vicinity of, I think, \$350 million to \$500 million that would need to be spent to keep it compliant through to September 2032. Again, that is work that will be done by the delivery authority as part of their consideration of venues and in line with the government's positions around the outcomes of the panel's review, in keeping with the New Norm and the funding envelopes that are within the IGA.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You have mentioned the review panel and \$1.6 billion. The Gabba and Suncorp were also mentioned. The Gabba upgrade was \$1.5 billion and Suncorp was \$1.1 billion. If memory serves me correctly, that was also in the review panel. How can you now rely on the review panel for QSAC but now not for Suncorp and the Gabba? The issue is this: Queenslanders are being told that as part of this funding pool, which will not increase over \$7.1 billion, for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, \$1.6 billion will be for QSAC, but you cannot indicate now how much because the government has announced an upgrade to Suncorp and the Gabba. How can you tell the committee that it is in that funding pool of \$7.1 billion if you have no idea how much any of this will cost?

**Mr Fraine:** I thank the member for the question. As I stated in my previous answer, the panel did talk about something for the Gabba, for instance, in the realm of 350 to 500 between now and 2032 and those elements will be explored—the same as they will for Suncorp—in regard to the work that the delivery authority will undertake on these venues.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** To conclude this point: the government announced the upgrades but Queenslanders do not know on this date what Suncorp and the Gabba will look like under the proposed changes and how much money will be expended on those programs; is that correct, Director-General?

**CHAIR:** This is about the third or fourth time you have had a crack at this.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am literally in disbelief, Chair. I cannot believe the government have not budgeted for this and have no idea how much they are spending.

**Ms GRACE:** We have up to \$7.1 billion.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, can you tell the—

**CHAIR:** Excuse me one moment. I am talking. I understand what you do not believe, member for Kawana, but I am pointing out that the questions have been repeated in different forms. I am asking the director-general to answer in the same manner that he has before.

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, Chair. I thank you member for the question. The government has been clear that it will ensure that the cost of any upgrades to QSAC, the Gabba and Suncorp will be within the \$2.7 billion budget envelope that was originally talked about for the Gabba.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, doing the quick calculations of what was in the review which the department are relying on for QSAC—\$1.6 billion—if you add up the figures in the review, it looks like the government's solution is at \$4.2 billion, which is up from the \$2.7 billion original Gabba solution. How is this saving money for Queensland taxpayers?

**Ms GRACE:** I do not accept the premise of the question. We have \$2.5 billion allocated through the federal government for the arena and we have the \$2.7 billion. As we said, we are going through a PVR. We now have an independent authority. We have a budget of that funding envelope. There have been questions raised about whether the \$1 billion on the podium is necessary for QSAC. We are doing

the PVR through the independent authority for which the legislation has gone through. We are selecting the chair and the board with our games partners, and that should be in place very soon. We have only just passed the legislation. They will be looking at this intensely. It is a nonsense to suggest that you go through the very lengthy process of a PVR.

We have noticed that the work that has been done in relation to the minor venues is very much in line with what they thought it would cost so that is excellent news. That is the kind of work we are doing. Obviously we need to go forward in relation to looking at all of these venues through the independent authority. We are looking forward to working with them. They are stood up. They have their staff and they have their budget. We have an interim CEO. The three experts who were on the review panel did a very good job in 60 days. Could they have completed PVRs on all of the possible options? It is a nonsense. Of course that was not going to happen. We are now looking at the information that they obtained. We have landed on where we want to go. The only people who are muddying the waters here are the opposition. Get on board. We will put a great games on. Through our independent authority we will deliver the venues that will make us a very proud 2032 games host.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, is the \$1 billion the minister refers to for the QSAC podium on top of \$1.6 billion or inclusive of the \$1.6 billion?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you member for the question, that is inclusive. Within the \$1.6 billion that the panel talked about, there was \$600 million for the existing grandstand and \$1 billion for the podium space.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, the director-general has said that with the announcement of the upgrades for Suncorp and the Gabba, there seems to be no plan for what that looks like. Can you tell the committee, because you are the minister, what the government's plan is for Suncorp and the Gabba and how much it will cost?

**Ms GRACE:** We are in the process of having those discussions. We know that there are upgrades that are required.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You have had three years—three years!

**CHAIR:** Member, cease the interjections.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I can't believe this. I can't believe it.

**CHAIR:** Member, I have already indicated that if there are any more interjections like that you will be warned. Can you stop interjecting and let the minister finish answering the question.

**Ms GRACE:** I am sorry, it has not been three years in relation to these. We have now landed following the 60-day review. Suncorp Stadium is now going to be upgraded. The Gabba will receive upgrades to see it through until 2032 and so will QSAC which has a training track ready to go. We are conducting the PVR through our independent authority. On 18 March, Alan Graham, the General Manager of Suncorp Stadium, said that enhancements in technology, large LED screens, additional seating, better access and egress for people are all things that are the agenda. They are all the things that we are looking at.

As part of the IGA, the intergovernmental agreement, 2.5 was for the arena. We will be starting a PVR in relation to that fairly soon—unless it is already underway; I am not sure of the timing. We will also be looking at working with stakeholders on the Gabba to see what needs to be done to upgrade it. There are indicative costs in relation to upgrades to those venues. I do not think Suncorp has had any substantial money spent on it for quite a number of years. It is well and truly looking forward to a facelift and to becoming even better than the premier stadium that it is.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, can you tell the committee when Queensland was awarded the 2032 games, please?

**Mr Fraine:** Member, as you have described, it was roughly three years ago in June.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I want to confirm that it is three years that the government has had the opportunity to get a proper plan in place, which it has not.

**CHAIR:** Is that a comment or a question, member for Kawana?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It is both. Minister, does the government regret not following the LNP's policy from the outset to have an independent coordination delivery authority to see through these processes and make sure that Queenslanders are not embarrassed by their government's delivery and bungle of the games?

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, rephrase the question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Does the minister regret not supporting the LNP position we had three years ago to have an independent delivery authority to take the politics out of this and to get on and deliver the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games?

**CHAIR:** Minister, you have the latitude to answer as you see fit.

**Ms GRACE:** We have an independent authority. The legislation has been done. I was appointed as the minister responsible in December last year. In that time we have had a 60-day review. Legislation has been put before the House. We have an independent authority now looking at delivering the venues for the games. We have an interim CEO, we have staff on board and we are in the process of appointing a board and chair. That is great progress that I am very proud to deliver as minister.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-general, can you tell the committee how much the new bridge to Bribie Island will cost, please?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you member for the question. That is work that I imagine is being done through the Department of Transport and Main Roads at this point.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You are correct, Director-General, but I would assume the department of infrastructure would have input into it and know about it?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you for the question. We certainly know about the project and we know that the Department of Transport and Main Roads are progressing with that at the moment as the lead.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Is the business case finalised on the project?

**Mr Fraine:** I thank the member for the question. I am not aware—

**Ms GRACE:** It is an election commitment.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I understand it is an election commitment. So election commitments do not have business cases?

**Mr SMITH:** Point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Just a minute. There are voices everywhere. The member for Bundaberg has a point of order.

**Ms GRACE:** The department does not do work on election commitments.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, everyone. Member for Bundaberg, what is your point of order?

**Mr SMITH:** The director-general did just say that the Department of Transport and Main Roads are the lead on this project. As it is not within the infrastructure portfolio at the moment, I suggest that the member move on to another line of questioning relevant to what we are here to do.

**CHAIR:** I am curious to see where this is going. Member for Kawana, feel free to enlighten us with another question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I will. Director-General, the government announced that it is a \$700 million commitment, so it is a pretty big piece of infrastructure in Queensland. A technical brief for the Bribie Island replacement bridge states that the structural life of the existing bridge could potentially be extended for a further 50 to 60 years by wrapping or jacketing the piles by no later than 2020. The estimated cost for the jacketing was \$5.3 million in 2015. Why didn't the department of infrastructure accept the engineering advice and undertake that work?

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, I do not know how he is going to answer this question. It sounds like it is a roads project. Director-General, can you give any enlightenment or answer to the member's question?

**Mr Fraine:** I thank the member for the question. I am not aware of this department having a role in that particular point that you refer to.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Does the department of infrastructure have a role in the recently announced Barron River bridge?

**Mr Fraine:** I thank the member for the question. That is a project that sits in the portfolio of transport and main roads.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I understand, but the department of infrastructure surely has involvement with these big infrastructure projects announced by government. The Bribie Island bridge went from \$200 million to \$700 million. This Barron River bridge is a \$450 million project. Surely the department of infrastructure has input into these projects.

**Mr Fraine:** I thank the member for the question. Certainly our department is responsible for the Infrastructure Proposal Development Policy, which sets out government's objectives for planning and assessing major project infrastructure proposals, and does sit at the core of the state's infrastructure

framework. Under this policy, our department works closely with agencies to support robust infrastructure project development and capital planning while also enabling the government of the day to take a strategic and coordinated approach to the capital program. I would repeat that agencies are responsible for leading the development of particular proposals within their portfolio.

**CHAIR:** We have had that 20-minute block. Later we will come back for five minutes of further questions from the opposition. We will go to some questions on this side. The first one will be from me.

Minister, with reference to SDS page 7 and the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, can you update the committee on the progress of the upgrades to the Sunshine Coast Stadium and let us know when the Sunshine Coast indoor sports centre will be out for tender?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the member for the question. As he knows, we fired the starting gun for procurement on sporting venues for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, especially on the Sunshine Coast. Today I can announce that expressions of interest are now open for the new \$142 million Sunshine Coast indoor sports centre. Companies can now put their hat in the ring to deliver this great project, which will be ready well before the games as an important community asset, just as this growing region deserves.

We have already seen strong interest from qualified and capable consultants and contractors for the \$148 million Sunshine Coast Stadium upgrade works, and I am delighted to advise the committee that short-listing is now complete and invitations to tender have been issued. These works are going to be transformational for this area. The stadium upgrade will deliver two brand new grandstands, with permanent seating going from 1,000 seats to more than 10,000 seats. What a great venue that those national and international training camps may want to consider. We invite them to go on that register. The upgrade will include better amenities, changing rooms, improved disability access, new function rooms and offices, and new retail space for merchandise and catering. It will be a modern stadium fit for both professional sport and community use that will be able to better host concerts, NRL matches and other big events.

The brand new indoor sports centre will have 11 courts—what an amazing centre for that area—and multifunctional areas hosting sports like basketball, netball, volleyball, pickleball, futsal and badminton. The centre is earmarked to host basketball preliminary games during the games in 2032, and what a fantastic venue it will be. The real value of these venues is not even the games; it is the community benefit and legacy. As Mayor Natoli said—and I welcomed her there that day. She came along and was so excited about it. Other local members chose not to come, but that is in their domain.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I was not invited.

**Ms GRACE:** Mayor Natoli said that these venues are first and foremost community venues for the people of the Sunshine Coast. That is why we are starting now—so they will be ready to use in 2027, long before the games are even here. They will deliver lasting economic and social benefits before, during and long after hosting the games. I know that the mayor was very excited. I could not agree more with her and absolutely cannot wait to see these projects progress. There are certainly exciting times ahead for the Sunshine Coast, and these facilities would not have been built but for the games. The legacy that they will provide for the community before, during and after the games will be outstanding.

**Mr SMITH:** I do have a question, unlike the opposition members of this committee, who seem to have taken this morning off.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, no preamble.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, with reference to SDS page 6 and the objective of a coordinated and future focused infrastructure program for Queensland, could you please update the committee on how the Miles government's Big Build is supporting regional Queensland, especially in my great electorate of Bundaberg?

**Ms GRACE:** What a great question. I know how much the member is looking forward to the new \$1.2 billion Bundaberg Hospital, which will deliver 121 overnight beds across intensive care, coronary, medical, surgical, paediatric and mental health. It is a much needed piece of infrastructure in Bundaberg and part of our \$107 billion Big Build, Queensland's biggest decade of infrastructure investment ever. Our Big Build will bring generational change, creating more jobs, better communities and stronger regions. It is about building the places, spaces and services that Queenslanders will use and enjoy for years to come. More than two-thirds of this work is happening in regional Queensland such as in Bundaberg, representing the biggest investment in regional Queensland for many years, supporting around 50,000 jobs—and we make no apologies for that. We think investing in the regions is what Queensland is all about, and this government is delivering in spades.

This budget is putting in place the infrastructure we need where we need it right across the state. As well as the hospital there is more Big Build funding for projects in Central Queensland like the Rockhampton Ring Road, \$1.73 billion; the Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline, \$984 million; and Central Queensland renewable energy projects such as the CopperString 2032 transmission line, which we spoke about earlier, a \$5 billion investment. Some other significant big builds include: the continuation of the Bruce Highway upgrades; Rookwood Weir, a \$569 million project; south-west pipeline, around \$95 million; Mackay port access road, \$497 million; Queensland Train Manufacturing Program at Torbanlea, \$9.5 billion; Borumba pumped hydro, \$107 million to continue planning; and enabling works for the Paradise Dam improvement projects. There is a significant capital boost of around \$2.2 billion for our health system which not only includes the hospital in Bundaberg but also includes new hospitals at Coomera and Toowoomba. With Queensland growing, now is the time to futureproof the lifestyle we all love. People are coming here in droves. We need to build the infrastructure required. As I said before, why would you not come to Queensland? Why would you want to be anywhere else?

**CHAIR:** First I want to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of students from Victoria Point State High School in the electorate of Redlands and, from the electorate of Greenslopes, students from Loreto College, Cavendish Road State High School, Coorparoo Secondary College, Holland Park State High School and Pathways State College. Welcome, all.

With reference to page 2 of the SDS and the infrastructure matters regarding digital innovation, could the minister update the committee on the implementation of the South-East Queensland digital twin and how it helps de-risk infrastructure delivery in planning?

**Ms GRACE:** I am very excited about this project. As we know, Queensland has experienced population growth, adding significant pressure on our infrastructure sector. Cross River Rail is a fantastic investment that we started years ago which will provide incredible connectivity and upgraded train stations right through from the Gold Coast. It is an incredible piece of infrastructure. What we need to do is upgrade where all of this infrastructure is and the government is using several productivity and workforce levers to try to deal with these pressures including looking at the role that innovation and effective use of data can play.

A digital twin for South-East Queensland is one of the tools the government is exploring. For those who have not heard this concept, a digital twin is a digital replica of the physical asset or network—essentially, an interactive 3D virtual copy of South-East Queensland. You actually see it in 3D. I think the Paris Olympics are using that for the delivery of the Olympic Games. They can tell on a 3D scale exactly where their infrastructure is, what needs to be done and it gives them that 3D perspective. Our State Infrastructure Strategy recognises the need for an SEQ digital twin to help plan, predict and understand Queensland's infrastructure and to improve decision-making through more effective use of data. It will also be invaluable in the planning, the delivery and the legacy of Brisbane 2032.

My understanding is that it is extremely accurate which makes it a dependable basis for making critical decisions in the physical built or natural environment. It provides an opportunity to develop an integrated systems view of infrastructure across the SEQ region to support more coordinated infrastructure planning and delivery, reduce costs, manage growth and improve livability and obviously upgrade as that infrastructure is added into the city. The government is investing \$5 million to develop a proof of concept that interactively demonstrates the technical feasibility of an SEQ digital twin.

Globally, digital twins are used to accelerate planning approvals or de-risking infrastructure delivery through the improved use of data. As I said, for example, Paris 2024 has been using a digital twin to undertake operational planning for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, including optimising the locations of emergency services teams and providing immersive navigation experiences for visitors so you can get that experience when you are in that city. Paris has been there a lot longer than Brisbane has. If they can do it, we can do it better. I am looking forward to seeing the development of the proof of concept over the course of this year to see how our digital twin can help us build an exciting future for SEQ and how we can implement this technology for the rest of Queensland as well. This is the start and we hope to see how we can then build on that for the rest of Queensland.

**CHAIR:** We will quickly go to about four minutes worth of questions for the opposition before we go on to the crossbench. We will run over by a couple of minutes.

**Mr HART:** Director-General, can you provide the committee with the total cost blowouts of infrastructure projects in Queensland since 2015?

**CHAIR:** That is a big one. The word 'blowout' is always contentious.

**Mr HART:** It is the budget, Chair. The figures should be available.

**CHAIR:** Who was that directed to, member?

**Mr HART:** The director-general.

**CHAIR:** Okay, if the director-general could answer that. You have a wide latitude to answer that.

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member. As the member notes, a combination of strong demand with ongoing domestic and international supply chain disruption has resulted in some increases in construction costs and prices over the capital program. For instance, building construction costs in Queensland have risen by 31.2 per cent over the three-year period ended March quarter 2024, and this is being experienced across the country. We also look at labour market constraints within the construction industry which, while they have eased over the last two years, have remained elevated by historical standards. We do have a tight labour market which continues to put upward pressure on industry wages.

**Mr HART:** Given the limited timeframe, can we just have the number please or possibly the director-general can table the—

**Ms GRACE:** That is a nonsense.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member. I am sure the director-general is coming to an answer as quick as he can. I am certainly hearing the answer at the moment.

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you. In terms of how this is dealt with, it is ensuring we have clear assessment frameworks, it is around ensuring appropriate contingency, it is around managing costs at program level and it is around funding supplementation. To the point of your question, over the last five years, if I understand the question, if I look at the variance between the capital program budget and the estimated actual it has been on or about the spend since 2015. Indeed, if I look at 2022-23, the capital program was met and in the previous years came in slightly under.

**Mr McDONALD:** Director-General, the Cross River Rail project was originally to have passengers in 2024. The government now tell us it is not going to be until 2026. Why is that the case?

**CHAIR:** Is this a question from yesterday? Anyway, you can answer that even though it may repeat what was said yesterday, Director-General, but just very briefly.

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. That is a question best directed in the area of transport and main roads.

**Ms GRACE:** QR.

**Mr Fraine:** And indeed Queensland Rail. As I have stated in answer to earlier questions, we certainly have a role in providing advice to other government agencies with regard to the nature of how their projects are progressing and we do keep an overarching portfolio approach around the capital program. Individual projects remain the business of individual agencies.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Chair, if I may, I want a follow-up question to the director-general on the member for Burleigh's question. The member for Burleigh specifically asked about the itemised infrastructure projects in Queensland and the cost blowouts on each project. That is something the minister could take on notice if you asked the minister to do that for you, Director-General. I think the committee and Queenslanders would be very interested to know—

**Ms GRACE:** Put it on notice in the parliament.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You can take that on notice now.

**Ms GRACE:** No.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Why on earth would the minister not want to give Queenslanders the cost escalations and blowouts on projects in Queensland? I do not understand why.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, it is quite an onerous question to drop right at the last moment.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I understand there are a lot of blowouts. It is a big list, but I would still like it.

**CHAIR:** Member, we had a lot of that answered then and I think that the minister has indicated that you have other avenues to put that on notice if you so desire.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, point of order: this is budget estimates.

**Ms GRACE:** For 2024-25.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** This is the time for the minister to answer the questions on project overruns and cost escalations and blowouts and you are accepting—

**CHAIR:** No, member. Listen to me carefully.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Sorry, but I had a point of order, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** I am listening to you and you can listen to me after.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You are accepting the minister's position that we just go and do it in some other forum and not budget estimates? How is that—

**CHAIR:** Member, if you listened to me before, that is a big one to drop, but bear in mind that we are looking at future expenditure. We are looking at past expenditure as it indicates future expenditure.

**Ms GRACE:** And all of those are on record.

**Mr McDONALD:** And the impacts of the past blowouts.

**Ms GRACE:** All of those costs for those projects are on the record individually. It is not for my department—

**Mr HART:** So you should be able to provide them.

**Ms GRACE:**—to go to every single department—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Just like the Gabba was on record too.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much.

**Ms GRACE:**—to have a look at every school hall—

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, everyone.

**Ms GRACE:**—et cetera. It is a nonsense question, but if they want to ask it—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** 'I'm not interested in blowouts.'

**Ms GRACE:**—they are more than able to put that on notice. They did not do that when they had the opportunity at estimates—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** But you can accept it on notice now.

**Mr HART:** You can take it on notice now.

**Ms GRACE:**—and then parliament as well.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Take it on notice now.

**Ms GRACE:** It is a very large ask.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Member for Burleigh, member for Lockyer and member for Kawana, you got your answer.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, we did not.

**CHAIR:** We are going to go to questions from the member for Traeger.

**Mr KATTER:** Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, over the last two years the communities of Burketown and Doomadgee had periods of months where they were on food rations and were without fuel for weeks at a time due to bridges not being built—major infrastructure items that are required—and they were told that the state cannot afford it or there is no money for it. Can the minister explain what strategies are in place to reconcile these growing inequities that will come from the concentration of infrastructure in the south-east leading to 2032?

**Ms GRACE:** Member for Traeger, I thank you for the question. That would probably be more in the transport and main roads area with regard to bridges and infrastructure. I know that some of them may have been impacted by recent weather events. Obviously, we are wanting to look at how best we can upgrade those. It is not directly in my portfolio area. Under the area of infrastructure, obviously, we support our agencies but, as lead agencies, they are the ones with the budgets allocated to them to spend those funds throughout the communities. QTRIP I think is one of the most comprehensive costs and pricing and budget that the Department of Transport and Main Roads looks to, to increase these.

I do not have an answer for you now, but can I suggest that maybe that is a question that we direct together to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Obviously, our Big Build is all part of that road network. As I have said before, 70 per cent of that is being built in the regions.

**Mr KATTER:** To polish that off, is there any plan to put a strategy in place to deal with any perceived imbalance?

**Ms GRACE:** Obviously.

**Mr KATTER:** Obviously there is going to be some disruption in the current equilibrium in spending. If, as proposed, there was a deficit now, is there a strategy in place to deal with that other than just the traditional road funding models?



**Ms GRACE:** Member, we have \$27.1 billion to be delivered in the budget under estimates today. A record around \$19 billion, or 68.5 per cent, of this capital program will be invested outside the Greater Brisbane region. They are the actual figures and, of course, we are strategising on how we can improve where there have been natural disasters such as in Cairns—how we build it better, how we make them safer. I drove that road between Cairns and Port Douglas. I have never seen such devastation on a road, during the time following that event. To have that opened at the speed at which it was and then the work needed to repair that was extraordinary work.

Of course, member, we strategise. As I said, the premise of your question is that we are not spending enough in the region. I repeatedly say that 70 per cent of what we are spending is in regional Queensland in order that we can provide the infrastructure required.

**Mr KATTER:** The definition of 'region'—when you say that, that is Toowoomba, the Sunshine Coast.

**Ms GRACE:** Yes, outside of the greater south-east corner. Those people would see themselves as living in regional towns. They would want their fair share of that infrastructure as equally as Mount Isa. For example, the CopperString project will be absolutely amazing for that area. I think, member for Traeger, it will bring the roads and bridges and everything that we need when we open up that critical minerals province. It is amazing, what is going to happen in that area.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, everyone. We have run out of time for this particular session. There was one question taken on notice about the \$1.6 billion estimate for the rollout of the temporary structures at QSAC. Do we have an answer on that?

**Ms GRACE:** It is on notice. We will find the information and get back to you before the end of the session.

**CHAIR:** Okay, we will get back to that one. Thank you very much, everyone. We will take a quick break and be back in 15 minutes.

#### **Proceedings suspended from 11.02 am to 11.15 am.**



**CHAIR:** Welcome back, everyone. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of industrial relations open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I will call on the opposition for their first question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, I have been raising issues of the CFMEU thuggery, intimidatory behaviour and bullying on worksites at budget estimates, in parliament and with the media for 15 years. Last week the minister said, regarding the behaviour of the CFMEU, that she was 'as shocked as anybody else' when hearing about the criminality part of that. Can the minister advise this committee what rock she has been hiding under for the past 15 years?

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, member: rephrase.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, I have been raising the issues of the CFMEU on construction sites, the Office of Industrial Relations and the workplace health and safety officers who have come to me as whistleblowers for years. Can the minister now advise why she was shocked, when allegations of those sorts of intimidatory practices on construction sites have been happening in Queensland by the CFMEU for years?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the member for the question. I think he is conflating two different things. I think he is conflating that. Under the federal legislation, obviously we do not condone any behaviour that is in line with what the member outlined. There have been many Federal Court referrals and many Federal Court decisions. There has been the ABCC that was in for a large part of the 15 years that the member talked about. They were all investigated. I think during that time we even had the Heydon royal commission. A lot of the issues that the member says he has been raising have been in the domain of the federal jurisdiction for a lot of those years, with many investigations and many referrals. When people raise issues, they have been looked at under the federal Fair Work Commission.

Let us not conflate criminality. That is absolutely undemocratic. It is not unionism. I am a very proud unionist and a very proud ex-secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions. That is not the way that the vast majority of people in the union movement conduct themselves. That is what is shocking. We have very tough laws here in relation to criminality of organisations. I was shocked to hear that that was occurring—as was the ACTU, as was the federal government and as were, I am sure, most people in Australia.

Let us not conflate issues that can be investigated under the Fair Work Commission, which have been. I have known that complaints have come from the member for Kawana as well into the CCC, which have been investigated since 2019. There are avenues and processes for these issues to be undertaken, which they have been. Let us not conflate criminality and behaviour that, under the act, is not acceptable and I do not condone it in any way, shape or form. It is not the way that we should be conducting ourselves or behaving.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, one only has to do a quick search online over the last—I could say 12 months, but I have documents here dating back years, of the CFMEU thuggery, bullying and intimidatory practices on construction sites in Queensland that you know I have been raising. Every time I raise it you accuse me, and have accused me in the past, of union bashing when I have been directly talking about the CFMEU and their tactics on construction sites in Queensland. What action has the minister personally taken against the CFMEU since 2015, when the minister was made Minister for Industrial Relations, to prevent these issues happening on construction sites in Queensland?

**CHAIR:** That was certainly a long preamble and a bit argumentative. I ask the member, in future, to get straight to the question instead of giving a long preamble. Minister?

**Ms GRACE:** I am not sure exactly what documents the member has in his hands, but these are largely governed under the Fair Work Commission. Since the hostile takeover by the Howard government of industrial relations, the area of—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It's John Howard's fault the CFMEU are doing what they are doing, is it?

**CHAIR:** Order, members.

**Ms GRACE:** I note there are interjections and I take those interjections.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Desperate.

**Ms GRACE:** They are under the federal system. It is not desperate; it is a reality. During that time, what I have said to the member is that if he has any evidence or anything that he wants to refer, which he has—and, may I say, the referrals that he has given, those decided to date, have all been unsubstantiated. In front of the CCC, they have all been unsubstantiated. I will repeat that: since 2019 a number of issues that the member for Kawana has referred to the CCC have been found to be unsubstantiated. These issues are in the domain of the federal jurisdiction. There have been many court decisions, many federal decisions et cetera.

During the time when issues are raised I do not condone it; nor do I believe that that is the way that people should be conducting themselves. I have spoken regularly with my director-general and with the deputy directors-general. In fact, I have put in place at the moment an operational review headed by Mr Greg Quinn. He comes from Hutchinson Builders, from the employer. He has 21 years working with Hutchinson Builders. There are terms of reference with regard to the workplace health and safety inspectorate. These have been subject to CCC investigations as well, as the member is well aware. I appointed Mr Quinn because of his background, because he brings vast experience to the role and because he is known for his hard work, fairness and integrity.

I announced this review in January. Mr Quinn began his work mid-February and has been consulting widely with industry stakeholders, including outside organisations, employer organisations, registered unions and Queensland workplace health and safety staff. I anticipate receiving the report from Mr Quinn by the end of this month. The review will consider the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland inspectorate, including: resourcing, training, accountability, decision-making consistency and enforcement and compliance capacity; policies and procedures to ensure the inspectorate is supported and meets stakeholder and community expectations of transparency, accountability, timeliness and consistency; the interaction between Workplace Health and Safety Queensland's policy teams and the inspectorate to ensure policy is implemented in practice; ensuring regular and robust proactive external engagement occurs with stakeholders and the community; and transparency and accountability of data and decision-making.

He has circled around and gone back to stakeholders. I am looking forward to his report. It is an operational report. I expect my department to implement the outcomes of the report. We have been subjected to CCC investigations, and some of those findings are still being considered. I do not think it is my domain to go into those but, of the ones decided, they have been unsubstantiated. I say to the chair and to the member for Kawana that obviously we are doing what we can to ensure that the department is working well operationally, but when there is a CCC investigation we have to let it take its course. That is exactly what happens similarly with a Federal Court decision.

I cannot be any more strong than to say I do not condone any behaviour of the sort. I know that there have been many, many instances of these issues being raised and investigated not only by the commission but also by the Federal Court. I am working with my department to ensure that we have a safe and healthy workplace under all circumstances.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, I have just been made aware that Premier Steven Miles was asked at a press conference whether he was aware of any bikie links to the CFMEU, to which he responded he is not aware. Is the minister aware of any bikie links with the CFMEU?

**Ms GRACE:** Thank you, member, for the question. I can honestly say I am not aware. I am privy to the information that is out in the public domain at the moment, similar to everyone else. I not aware of any, no.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, links between the CFMEU and bikies have been exposed in Victoria. Is the minister aware that the CFMEU, which is an industrial organisation registered in Queensland, has signed a contract—an EBA—with RB Scaffolding, a company run by alleged bikie members?

**CHAIR:** Just a moment, you have come out with some information that needs verification about ownership structure.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** Let's see it.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I was hoping you would ask, Mr Chair. I table a copy of an article about Hells Angels—

**Mr McDONALD:** I will table that, Chair.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I will give it to the member for Lockyer. The article reports Hells Angels Gold Coast extortion involving Mr Rhys Mirkin and Mr Brady Van Rooijen.

**CHAIR:** Can we have a look at that?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I also ask the member for Lockyer to table a picture of a motorcycle from Mr Rhys Mirkin.

**Mr McDONALD:** I will table that, Chair.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I will also get the member for Lockyer to table the CFMEU's RB Major Contracts and CFMEU Union Collective Agreement.

**Mr McDONALD:** I will table that, Chair.

**CHAIR:** It is not a prop, member.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I will also have the member for Lockyer table the company records that show that the two individuals I have mentioned are the owners, directors and secretaries of the company I mentioned when they were alleged to have been part of the Hells Angels criminal motorcycle gang.

**Mr McDONALD:** I will table that, Chair.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, they also provided the scaffolding for the Parliament House refurbishment. It was happening under the minister's nose and Steven Miles says he was not aware of it.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** All he had to do was look out his window.

**CHAIR:** Member! Minister, did you want to examine these documents?

**Ms GRACE:** I am happy to look at those, but, obviously, these are allegations at this point in time. I do not know the company or the individuals. I have never met them. I do not know them. Can I say that that agreement is registered federally.

**Mr Hart:** Quick internet search might help.

**Ms GRACE:** I understand that, under the federal jurisdiction, they are looking at agreements that have been entered into. I do not know if they will look into this or not. I am not privy to agreements that are registered under the federal system. The member conflates state-based jurisdictions with the hostile takeover of industrial relations by the Howard government. I repeat: these agreements are registered in the federal jurisdiction. They go through the federal jurisdiction process and are registered by the Fair Work Commission, not the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

We largely look after government workers and local government workers. That is the area of our domain, not the agreement to which the member refers. I have no knowledge of that agreement, which has been federally registered. I have no knowledge of the individuals involved. Has the member reported this to the police? Does he have grounds for reporting this not only to the police but also to the

CCC? If he has all this evidence, which he has tabled, what action has he taken to ensure that these matters are fully investigated? I am not privy to this information. He has it all. He tabled it all. What action has he taken to have these matters thoroughly investigated? If he has any evidence, I urge him to go through the proper channels.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, the CFMEU is a registered industrial organisation in Queensland. I will not sit here and accept the minister's excuse that this is a federal matter.

**CHAIR:** Member, what is your question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, is the CFMEU a registered industrial organisation pursuant to the Industrial Relations Act in Queensland under the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. The short answer is yes.

**Ms GRACE:** Yes, they are. They have state registration, yes, but these are all matters in the federal jurisdiction.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Sorry—I asked the director-general.

**CHAIR:** That is fine. You have your answer, member. Your next question, member.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Did you confirm that, Director-General?

**Mr Fraine:** Yes.

**Ms GRACE:** They have state registration.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Excuse me, Minister, I understand you are a bit agitated, but I am asking the director-general.

**CHAIR:** Member, I am running this show. Do you have your next question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, having confirmed that the CFMEU is a registered industrial organisation in Queensland, what investigation will your department undertake into allegations of bikie links to companies doing deals with the CFMEU?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. I might confer with my deputy director-general about whether we have any of those on foot.

**Ms GRACE:** They are under the federal jurisdiction, for goodness sake!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The CFMEU is registered in Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Members! You know the rule—through the chair. Standing order 246 states you do not quarrel across the table.

**Ms Heelan:** I thank the member for the question. Where allegations relate within the workplace health and safety regime, not the federal Fair Work framework, we do undertake investigations into any workplace health and safety complaints, pursuant to the legislation we administer.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, if it is proved that a registered Queensland industrial organisation is entering business contracts and EBAs with alleged criminal bikie links, what action would the department take against that registered industrial organisation in Queensland?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. Again, in line with this line of questioning, I might ask my deputy director-general to facilitate that answer.

**Ms Heelan:** I thank the member for the question. Can you clarify if you are asking in relation to the union itself or are you talking in relation to entry permit holders or health and safety representatives?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The registered organisation, which is the CFMEU.

**Ms GRACE:** It is highly hypothetical too at this point.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, members.

**Ms Heelan:** If evidence came to the attention of the regulator then the regulator would obviously act on that. That would be subject to the view of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. That is not a matter under the work health and safety legislation.

**Ms GRACE:** And police, too. We would refer it to police.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Who is the regulator? You mentioned the regulator.

**Ms Heelan:** I am the regulator for the workplace health and safety legislation. The Queensland Industrial Relations Commission is a separate component.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Yes, indeed, but Queensland based, not federally based. So Queensland does have power to do things against the CFMEU?

**Ms GRACE:** In the state system.

**Ms Heelan:** Correct. As the minister said, in the state system but not pursuant to the work health and safety legislation.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** What I am trying to ascertain, Director-General, is that all this discussion about 'these are just federal matters' and 'everyone is going to deal with it federally'—the Victorian Labor government has announced an independent review. The federal Labor government have announced a review through Fair Work. Has the Queensland government directed—

**Ms GRACE:** They have specific allegations.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, has the Queensland government directed any independent inquiries be undertaken about the CFMEU and allegations that have surfaced in the media in the last week?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. As the deputy director-general has discussed, if there are particular allegations or accusations made then they are investigated within the limits of our jurisdiction. Beyond that, there is nothing further at this point.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, as I said before, I have just been made aware that the Premier has said he was unaware of bikie links with the CFMEU. I have now tabled, through the member for Lockyer, documents about a company in Queensland where the directors are reported in the media to have Hells Angels, a criminal outlaw gang, links. Was the minister aware that that particular company was delivering the scaffolding job on the parliamentary precinct for the refurbishment?

**CHAIR:** Just for clarification, the article we have examined is from 2014 and the photos are from 2015.

**Ms GRACE:** Are you kidding me? This is ridiculous.

**Mr SMITH:** You were the attorney-general, weren't you?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am sorry. If they are a criminal bikie gang, it does not—

**Ms GRACE:** That is misleading. Can I see the documents, Chair? I think I should be given the opportunity to look at these documents.

**CHAIR:** Yes. Can we pass them over to the minister?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Excuse me, Chair—

**CHAIR:** Hang on. We had a question and that has gone to the minister, I believe. Is that right or was it to the director-general?

**Mr BROWN:** You did nothing—under your watch.

**CHAIR:** We are giving the minister an opportunity to have a look at that.

**Mr SMITH:** I think he was the attorney-general at the time.

**Mr BROWN:** Yes. He was the minister.

**CHAIR:** Quiet please, members.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** To take the interjection, the attorney-general does not prosecute criminal gangs; the police do—and they were, thank you very much.

**Mr BROWN:** Stop making excuses.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, everyone. Stop the banter across the chamber.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I cannot believe they are trying to justify what year the criminal gangs were members of a criminal gang.

**CHAIR:** Member, I have just asked you to stop the banter.

**Ms GRACE:** My only response in relation to this is that these are, as you said, over 10 years old. The photograph is a photograph of someone on a motorcycle. He has been sitting on these for 10 years and has not referred them to the police or to the relevant authorities for this to be investigated. If this was in my hands, I would have referred it straightaway. This is the first I have seen of this.

He cannot conflate a federally registered agreement with state registration of a union. They are very different things. The member does not understand the industrial relations system. Once it is registered federally, they are of their own jurisdiction; it is not the jurisdiction of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission—and this is registered federally. These are over 10 years old. If he has sat on them, shame on him. He should have referred them to the relevant authorities. If I had become aware, I would have referred them if there was evidence in relation to this. They were when he was in government as the industrial relations minister in 2014. I ask: what did he do in 2014—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** This is our budget estimates.

**Ms GRACE:**—when that came out?

**Mr BROWN:** Sat on his hands.

**Ms GRACE:** Sat on his hands—exactly. I take the interjection from the member for Capalaba.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You have been the minister for 10 years.

**Ms GRACE:** How dare they? When they were in government and this came to light, they sat on their hands and did nothing!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** What did I do? They were charged for criminal gang laws. That is what we did.

**Mr BROWN:** You put them on boards.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, members. Order!

**Ms GRACE:** Ten years down the track, they come into this House accusing us of doing nothing. In relation to his question about scaffolding, no, I am not privy to what scaffolding goes up on all sites including Parliament House. My understanding is that obviously the contractor engaged subcontractors. This was when they were in government—2014—and they did nothing.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Point of order, Chair—

**Ms GRACE:** Shame on them.

**CHAIR:** Minister, please.

**Ms GRACE:** If there is any evidence, they should bring it forward.

**CHAIR:** Minister, we have a point of order.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Point of order, Chair: the EBA was last year—last year, under this minister's watch.

**Ms GRACE:** Under the federal jurisdiction.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** 2023 to 2027.

**CHAIR:** Member, that is not a point of order. What is your point of order?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The minister has misled the committee by accusing a former government from 10 years ago. This is a year old. This was under her watch when she was the industrial relations minister.

**CHAIR:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am correcting the record.

**CHAIR:** Do you have a further question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Yes, I do.

**Ms GRACE:** Can I correct the record, too? That agreement is under the federal jurisdiction. I do not have jurisdiction in the Fair Work Commission.

**CHAIR:** We did get that, Minister.

**Ms GRACE:** The bikie incident—the one that is criminal and the one that is most concerning—happened in 2014—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** And they were charged.

**Ms GRACE:**—when the Campbell Newman government was in power.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Member for Kawana, do you have a further question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, on 21 March 2023, CFMEU official Kurt Pauls had a penalty imposed on him by the Federal Court—a \$30,000 fine for eight contraventions. Further, it was reported that the Federal Court heard that Kurt Pauls had an extensive history of breaking workplace laws. Some months later, you personally appointed Kurt Pauls to the Work Health and Safety Board. Did you deliberately disregard Kurt Pauls' contraventions by the Federal Court or did you struggle to find a CFMEU official without contraventions?

**CHAIR:** Member, you nearly had it there. Rephrase the question without the argumentative part.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I will rephrase the question. Point of order, Chair: can you inform this committee and this estimates whether you are still a member of the CFMEU or not?

**CHAIR:** Let me go through this. You are asking me a question now? Are you asking me a question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am asking for a declaration or not of a conflict of interest because, as of 12 July, you were still a member of the CFMEU. If that is not the case, I think we need to know.

**CHAIR:** This is most unusual. The questions usually go to the minister.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Please answer.

**CHAIR:** I am talking. It is interesting the way you want to put this through estimates. As you well know, my declaration of interest has been upgraded and I am not a member.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** If we are going down this route of questioning each other, we are going to allow some questions from the minister in the future.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I can certainly say that I have never been a member and never will be a member.

**Ms GRACE:** They did nothing when they were in government.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I will never be a member of the CFMEU and I do not intend to be.

**Ms GRACE:** They would not have you.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, why was Kurt Pauls appointed by you to the Work Health and Safety Board, considering his extensive contraventions of workplace federal laws and state contraventions?

**Ms GRACE:** I think the work of the Work Health and Safety Board is really about workplace safety. As we know, the construction industry has challenges when it comes to workplace health and safety. It is probably up there with some of the most dangerous industries that we have, in line with other industries as well. It is important that we have a representative from the union. Prior to the appointment to the board, the department undertakes a range of checks to determine the suitability of any applicant. This includes consideration of criminal history, bankruptcy, personal particulars. They do ASIC checks. They do lobbying checks. They do a number of checks.

Kurt Pauls is a worker representative on the board established under the act. My understanding is that he gives advice and recommendations. They work with the department. He went through all of the checks and balances. He has been appointed to the board to represent that very dangerous area of the construction industry.

**CHAIR:** We will come back to opposition questions in a while, but we will go to government questions now. Minister, with reference to pages 7 and 8 of the SDS, will you inform the committee how the Miles government is continuing to improve protections for workers who are dealing with the scourge of sexual harassment at the workplace?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the member for the question. I am sure everyone on the committee would agree that every worker has the right to do their job without being sexually harassed in the workplace. Sadly, however, workers across Queensland continue to be subjected to these practices. The impact of this is wide ranging and often significantly affects the long-term psychological health of those faced with this abhorrent conduct. That is why the Miles government is continuing our proud record of taking decisive action when it comes to worker safety.

Today I am pleased to announce that the Work Health and Safety Regulation is being amended to expressly deal with workplace sexual harassment. The inclusion of sexual harassment in the Work Health and Safety Regulation is another nation-leading reform being delivered by the Miles government. The Workplace Health and Safety Act already places a requirement on employers to remove, as far as is reasonably practical, risks to health and safety, including the risk of sexual harassment. These new regulations will create an obligation for employers to proactively manage the risk of sexual harassment of their employees, including a written sexual harassment prevention plan. I am pleased to advise that the regulatory amendments are out for consultation now.

These reforms will come into effect in two tranches: the first is due in September this year; the second is anticipated to commence in March next year. The first tranche will create an obligation for employers to proactively manage and review the risk of sexual harassment at their workplace, including through the implementation of control measures. It will also define sexual harassment in line with state and federal anti-discrimination legislation. When developing control measures, employers will need to have regard to all relevant matters in relation to the risk of sexual harassment. The second tranche will focus on written prevention plans. The Office of Industrial Relations—and I thank them—is developing extensive guidance materials to support employers to meet these new obligations across both tranches.

We have consulted widely with the Special Commissioner for Equity and Diversity, the Human Rights Commissioner, the QIRC, registered unions and employer organisations, the women's sector, the legal profession and the Workplace Health and Safety Board. These reforms continue the proud

legacy of this government, including amendments to the Industrial Relations Act which provide nation-leading protections for workers subject to sexual or gender-based harassment. The Miles government is proud to back Queensland workers. We always have, and always will, do the best we can in nation-leading reforms.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, my question also refers to pages 7 and 8 of the SDS. Will you please inform the committee how the Miles government is protecting Queensland workers from the risk of silicosis from engineered stone and other crystalline silica products?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the member for the question. I am pleased to update this committee on our government's longstanding campaign to ban engineered stone. Queensland first put a ban on the national agenda in 2018. Shamefully, the government of the day chose not to do anything and sat on its hands—much like sitting on your hands when you have evidence of bikies in certain areas. Thankfully, the Albanese government has taken action to protect workers. In December last year Commonwealth, state and territory workplace health and safety ministers agreed to a national ban on the manufacture, supply, processing and installation of engineered stone benchtops, panels and slabs. This is complemented by a legislated import prohibition on engineered stone products entering Australia, much like we did with asbestos-containing products years ago.

The ban on working with engineered stone came into effect in Queensland on 1 July. We have been campaigning and consulting on this for the last five years. We have been undertaking audits and screening workers under the WorkCover act. There has been a lot of activity happening in that time. Work with engineered stone products installed on premises before 1 July 2024 will be permitted under stringent safety measures, much like our approach to asbestos. There will be an audit to undertake this work. Businesses will be required to notify Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and work with engineered stone in a controlled way, so there will be no dry cutting and that kind of thing. Failure to provide the required information will constitute an offence.

We have to do this. We cannot allow it to occur. Like the removal of asbestos, we take issues that cause workers harm very seriously. I am proud of how Queensland has led the nation when it comes to getting this dangerous product out of our workplaces. I congratulate federal minister Burke, who has done an excellent job bringing all of the states together in relation to this. I was first briefed by my department back in 2018 and we issued urgent safety notices. We went about banning all dry cutting. We established Australia's first dust lung disease register. We implemented Australia's first code of practice for the engineered stone industry. This was followed by Australia's first code of practice for managing silica dust exposure in construction and manufacturing, which became a real hazard as well. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland conducted a widespread and comprehensive statewide audit of all known engineered stone workplaces in Queensland, with ongoing compliance and enforcement.

We have provided free screening to over 1,000 workers which is funded by WorkCover. We have funded several dust lung disease projects. Work is now underway that not only involves Queensland-based institutions like the University of Queensland and I-MED Queensland but also interstate and international collaborations with the University of New South Wales and the University of Chicago. We have led the nation in this. It is great to be working with Minister Burke and the Albanese government to put this ban in place so we can protect our workers working with this dangerous product.

**CHAIR:** Minister, once again pages 7 and 8 of the SDS refer to recent reforms to workplace health and safety in Queensland. Will you tell the committee how these are being complemented by the recent uplift to frontline staff?

**Ms GRACE:** We are committed to ensuring Queensland employers provide healthy, safe and fair workplaces. As I have said many times, workers sell their labour, not their health. I am proud of the new laws we passed in May to further strengthen protections and representation for Queensland workers. These laws give effect to recommendations from the independent review of Queensland's Workplace Health and Safety Act and the Boland review of the model work health and safety laws. These changes will elevate and enhance the role of health and safety representatives, including the right to choose their own training provider and be fully reimbursed for attending this training. Sometimes a barrier to these workers getting the training they need to represent their fellow workers is the cost of doing the training. They are now able to have that training reimbursed. The changes will also: clarify the powers of HSRs to direct businesses to cease unsafe work and obtain information relevant to their work groups; prohibit an organisation from offering or taking out insurance to cover penalties for workplace health and safety breaches; and promote consultation about work health and safety with workers and their representatives. We clarify the rights of HSRs and entry permit holders when assisting and representing



workers in response to suspected contraventions in the workplace. We have streamlined the issue and dispute resolution process, including moving some matters from the Magistrates Court to the QIRC, which is more of a lay tribunal where we can get these matters looked at quickly.

As the committee knows, the Queensland workforce is growing—111,600 extra workers were added in 2023-24 alone. To keep our workforce safe we needed to boost the number of frontline staff that regulate industries and support Queenslanders. That is why in this budget the Miles government is providing a boost of around \$97 million for new staff to deliver critical frontline regulatory services that will help Queensland workplaces, including: 40 new workplace health and safety inspectors; nine electrical safety inspectors; five new psychological specialist advisors to respond to psychological issues and inquiries; extra staff in the Workers' Compensation Review Unit and medical assessment tribunals to ensure timeliness throughout the whole workers compensation process; and two new prosecutors in the independent Office of Work Health and Safety Prosecutor. I think with the increase in workers of those numbers, this \$97 million is money very well spent to beef up the department.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Capalaba, just briefly.

**Mr BROWN:** How is the Miles government supporting Public Service workers?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the member for the question. As we know, we were proud on Labour Day that we announced two new workplace entitlements, around reproductive leave and superannuation on unpaid parental leave, for Queensland's hardworking public sector workers. As announced by the Premier yesterday, these arrangements will also be available now to government owned corporations Queensland Rail and Seqwater, extending these benefits to another 24,000 workers.

I really welcome the fact that the opposition has welcomed our reproductive leave entitlements. I am happy to put that on the record. These are 10 non-cumulative days of reproductive health leave for all public sector workers. This leave can be used for a range of things including: chronic reproductive health, such as endometriosis and other ailments; fertility treatments such as IVF, which are often very gruelling processes to go through; preventive screenings associated with reproductive health; and treatments associated with reproductive health including hysterectomies and vasectomies.

Work has already begun on the implementation of this new entitlement and it will be in place by the end of September this year. We are working with stakeholders. We are just making sure we get this right so that workers can look after their reproductive health, which is so important for the human race, so to speak. It is also an acknowledgement that often these treatments can be very laborious and very lengthy. These 10 non-cumulative days will go a long way to assisting public sector workers, regardless of gender, when they are experiencing these kinds of pressures in their life.

**CHAIR:** We will go to the opposition for some questions. We have about 10 minutes.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, the company I spoke about before—RB Scaffolding, which has done the EBA with the CFMEU in Queensland—was registered in April 2022 as a company. The EBA they signed was in 2023, only last year, and the parliamentary work where RB Scaffolding was engaged was only between 2022 and 2024. Minister, the opposition has been recently told by whistleblowers about this company having previous alleged links with criminal gangs and only recently, in the last 12 to 24 months, being engaged with the EBA with the CFMEU. Now that the minister knows about it, what is she going to do about?

**CHAIR:** Just clarifying, is that previous links to alleged criminal organisations? Do we know of the current directorship of the company, what their other memberships are? Is there any way to verify that?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You would be closer to the CFMEU members than me. Perhaps you should call them.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member. That is most disorderly.

**Ms GRACE:** We are talking about a company, not the union.

**CHAIR:** Hang on a tick—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** A company has done a deal with the CFMEU—

**CHAIR:** Wait, member; I am talking. That interjection was highly disorderly. Do not do it again.

**Ms GRACE:** The premise of the question is incorrect. The agreement is registered under the federal jurisdiction. My understanding is that—

**Mr Hart** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Keep going, Minister.

**Ms GRACE:** But it is under the federal jurisdiction. These people do not understand industrial relations and how they operate. It is not an agreement registered—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** They were working out your window. All you had to do was open your ministerial window and see the scaffolding there.

**CHAIR:** Wait! Member, I have cautioned you numerous times about interjecting. I have said about five or six times to not do it or you would be warned. You are now officially warned under the standing orders for your disorderly interjections.

**Ms GRACE:** My understanding is, following the revelations, that the Fair Work Commission through the general manager is looking at administration and looking at these in detail. We are not sure exactly where that is going to land, but Minister Burke and the Prime Minister have made it clear that they support this action and that if there is evidence they will include all of the areas that need to be included. Can I say that I support that 100 per cent. We will work cooperatively with the federal jurisdiction on anything they need. The Premier has asked our Police Commissioner to liaise with the Victorians about any issues up here in Queensland.

I once again urge the member: rather than asking me about who erected scaffolding around Parliament House, if he is aware of allegations in relation to this matter he should raise them in the appropriate channels. I can bet that he has not done that. I can bet that he has done nothing but sit on his hands, like he did when he was IR minister in 2014. We will fully cooperate with any investigations. I have made that clear to Minister Burke. I spoke to him twice last week. We are awaiting further advice on what action will be taken by the Fair Work Commission or the federal government and we will cooperate 100 per cent. Criminality in unions is not acceptable, and we will do everything in our power, together with the federal, to stamp it out. I make that 100 per cent, perfectly clear.

If the member has any evidence—he saw the scaffolding on that building as well. What did he do with the information that he had? Has he taken it further? I will liaise with him afterwards about whether any action has been taken by him because I think it would be common for someone who would know that to take the appropriate action.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, let us just cut through the waffle. It is the minister's job to know this. How on earth would the opposition know—

**CHAIR:** Stop, member!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** How would the opposition—

**CHAIR:** Member, rephrase your question. Avoid the preamble. Ask the question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, how would an opposition MP know about an EBA done between the CFMEU and a company only registered in the last two years?

**CHAIR:** Minister, the question is a bit imprecise. Feel free to answer that any which way you want.

**Ms GRACE:** Well, obviously the member at the moment appears to have documentation which he has tabled. I have no knowledge of how long he has had those documents. They are not documents that I have been aware of. There are thousands of agreements registered in the Fair Work Commission, which is not my jurisdiction. I am not privy to every single agreement that is registered in the federal jurisdiction. That is ludicrous. It is a nonsense—an absolute nonsense.

If evidence comes his way from media, whistleblowers or whatever and he sits on that—it is as ludicrous as me asking him about who built the scaffolding around Parliament House and whether he knew who it was. It is a ludicrous line of questioning designed only to grandstand. If he was aware of this and he has done nothing, I suggest that he answer that question to the people. If that is what we are going to get again, like we had in 2014, I think the member has some explaining to do.

**CHAIR:** Is there a further question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Chair, as I have already indicated to this committee, I have found out very, very recently about this, but the minister is the Minister for Industrial Relations. Now that she knows, what is the minister going to do about it?

**Ms GRACE:** These are under the federal jurisdiction. Currently, there is work that he is well aware of. The federal government, together with the Fair Work Commission, is working on the allegations that have been raised. They have made a public statement. I have sought urgent departmental and legal advice on these developments about what we can do to complement what the federal government and the Fair Work Commission have done. I have had those meetings already. I will continue to take advice

as the matter evolves, including about whether any action needs to be taken by the state government to ensure the administrator has the powers they need in relation to the state registered entity. Those meetings with my department have already occurred following discussions with the minister on where this is occurring. If that advice suggests that there is any action, as I said we will cooperate with the federal Fair Work Commission. I know that they are speaking federally as well to understand exactly the administration process and what will be required. We will ensure the process is successful. We will take action, including the removal of any legislative barriers.

We are working cooperatively. I have instructed my department to get the advice we require. What we are waiting on is what action the Fair Work Commission will take, to what extent, who is included, who is not included, whether we need as a state government to cooperate and take any action in relation to that as well et cetera. That is the action I am taking, unlike not referring known bikies operating a business in 2014 and doing nothing.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Point of order, Mr Chair: that is not correct. The documents I have tabled show the company was only registered in the last two years. That is when the company was registered. A question to the director-general—

**CHAIR:** Just a moment. That is arguing the point. It is not a point of order. Do you have a further question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, are you aware of any senior officers or other staff in the Office of Industrial Relations or Workplace Health and Safety that are subject to Crime and Corruption Commission investigations?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. Certainly, by way of context, we do not discuss the matters around individual employees. All complaints, of course, are taken seriously, and where there are references to particularly fraud and corrupt conduct, those things, if they come to us, are referred to the CCC, for instance. There are certainly active matters with the CCC, but, as I mentioned, I am not in a position to discuss individual matters.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, confirming you have just said there are active matters with the Crime and Corruption Commission Queensland, what do those issues relate to?

**Mr Fraine:** Thank you, member, for the question. I might refer this in the detail to my deputy director-general.

**Ms Heelan:** I thank the member for the question. I can confirm that there are 15 matters alleging corrupt conduct that were reported to the Office of Industrial Relations; however, I can assure you that the department is committed to ensuring robust governance and ethical conduct of all employees by preventing, detecting, and, where necessary, investigating all incidents of fraud and corrupt conduct. I cannot go into specific details. These matters are still on foot either within the Office of Industrial Relations' Ethical Standards Unit or with the Crime and Corruption Commission.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, through you to Ms Heelan, though, the Clerk of the Parliament has said that if matters are before the CCC, estimates can prosecute these issues, and I am not asking for names, I am just asking what the matters relate to in terms of the allegations, please.

**CHAIR:** Bear with us for a moment. I am not sure we can get an answer to that, as per the previous answers. Can anyone furnish an answer on that or not?

**Ms Heelan:** I thank the member for the question. I can say broadly that they are in relation to conduct that relates to employees or in fact conduct of a non-government entity. I can advise that a number of these were in relation to use of departmental motor vehicles and use of information that may or may not be a party to an officer's role.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Would any of these investigations relate to officers or the allegations that officers are giving information to the CFMEU that they ought not to be giving to the CFMEU or third parties?

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, I appreciate your line of questioning, but you are getting dangerously close to looking at matters that may be sub judice, and standing order 233 relates specifically to that. I do not know that they can provide us with an answer without breaching that standing order.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I will be more direct in a minute, Chair, but sub judice investigations are not sub judice because criminal charges have not been laid.

**CHAIR:** Indeed. I do understand the standing order there, but we are in no position to know if charges have been laid or not on these particular issues. Is there any further information that can be furnished, bearing in mind the limitations we do face?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you. They have confirmed matters are before the CCC; that is fine. Minister, one of the first bills that this government introduced in 2015 was with respect to right-of-entry laws—I think it was a 2015 bill—which gave the union, the CFMEU, the right to rock up to a construction site without giving the 24 hours notice which was subject to state laws and federal laws. Since 2015, we have seen bullying, intimidatory practices on construction sites in Queensland, and workers being put at risk. Does the minister regret the government moving to get rid of those laws which gave 24-hour notice provision for the CFMEU?

**CHAIR:** Before you answer that, minister, we have nearly run out of time, that question contains argumentative elements, but feel free to answer that question briefly as you so desire.

**Ms GRACE:** In relation to right-of-entry laws, we are very proud of our records. We have some of the best and leading workplace health and safety laws in the country. There are industries. These are not changes that were made for the CFMEU, this is for the whole—anyone that is registered under the legislation of the Work Health and Safety Act. We do not believe that when there is a very serious accident, a very serious incident, in a workplace that 24 hours notice needs to be given. We should be in there straightaway. Those people who represent those workers should be able to enter those workplaces and determine and represent those members who have been affected. We make no apologies for that. As long as we are in government, we will maintain the act exactly as it is.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. We will move to the members of the crossbench.

**Dr MacMAHON:** My question is for the minister. Based on the inflation projected in the 2024-25 budget, the EBAs for state school teachers and public healthcare workers will result in a real wage cut of nearly two per cent by the conclusion of these agreements. What modelling has the government done with respect to the impact of inflation on these workers' wages?

**Ms GRACE:** Thank you, member, for the question. I am not sure if you are aware that we have a cost-of-living adjustment in our EBA. We have a very generous enterprise bargaining agreement with our public servants of four per cent, four per cent and three per cent. I am not aware of any inflation figures for 2024-25 that is over or possibly over that amount at this stage. Obviously, it is an estimate, but what we have built into the agreement for the first time is that should inflation be at a certain level, like in the first year—it was very hard to make an agreement. We understood this, particularly as someone who has bargained agreements for many years of their life, that in a high inflationary environment, how do you lock in a percentage that will make workers go backwards? In order to compensate for that, for the first time we put in a cost-of-living adjustment whereby if inflation is over a certain amount, there is a cap of an additional three per cent that will be paid as a lump sum payment. That was very welcomed by our teachers, nurses, police, cleaners—all of those people. It was paid in the first year of the EBA because inflation, I think, was over seven per cent, member, so it had met that criteria. We have built in scaffolding, so to speak, that if there is—

**Mr McDonald** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** I know. I wanted to use that because I thought it was actually quite apt. We have built that into our EBA so that we can compensate our workers in line with that. I think that was a really great enterprise bargaining outcome and I know that our public servants welcomed it and they have benefited from that.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Will the cost-of-living adjustment be continued if inflation continues to go up?

**Ms GRACE:** Yes, it is part of the whole bargaining agreement, member, and that is across the public sector—if inflation reaches a certain level above the amount. Obviously if it is coming towards the end of the agreement, we start bargaining again and then we would look to see what impact that has going forward. I think we had probably one of the most generous agreements in the country at the time and we want to make sure that our public servants are respected, well paid and in a safe and productive environment. I think it is a great question in light of the high inflationary era—how do you accommodate that? I think we are one of the first states to actually do that, member, so it has been pretty terrific, and I know that public servants have been very grateful. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** No further crossbench questions. We will now move to five minutes of questions from the government. I will go to the member for Bundaberg.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, referring back to pages 7 and 8 again, could you please provide the committee with an update on Queensland's nation-leading Labour Hire Licensing scheme and ongoing national scheme harmonisation efforts? Sorry, it is a bit hard.

**Ms GRACE:** Yes, you are being disrupted.

**Mr SMITH:** It is like I am in the classroom again.

**Ms GRACE:** Yes, I know! A great teacher you were, member for Bundaberg, and an even better local member for Bundaberg. I thank the member for the question. Earlier this year I had the opportunity to visit a sweet potato farm in Bundaberg and it was terrific. I saw firsthand the positive impact our labour hire scheme was having for workers. It was truly exceptional. Our licensing scheme was set up in 2018; we led the nation. It was the first in the nation. It levelled the playing field for legitimate businesses and stopped the exploitation of workers right across Queensland. Our nation-leading scheme has lifted labour hire industry standards over the last six years and has been recognised as the model blueprint for other states to follow. When it started, we predicted we would have around 2,000 labour hire businesses. We actually got 3,000 businesses registered with Labour Hire Licensing, far exceeding our expectations.

Since then, the number of licences has grown by over one-third, to 4,046 licences as at 10 July this year. Our labour hire licensing compliance unit includes 15 labour hire inspectors and 12 co-badged industrial relations and work health and safety inspectors, who take strong compliance action against exploitation. The results speak for themselves. It has been very successful. It was the model for the federal harmonisation that they were undertaking. We have had 26 successful prosecutions. It has levelled the playing field. Labour hire businesses were being undercut by those who were not doing the right thing. We have had 344 licences suspended, 116 licences cancelled, 298 licences granted with conditions, 93 licence applications refused and 369 licence applications withdrawn. Before they were not operating in a regulatory environment. This has certainly created a level playing field. I believe that in the Bundaberg area, where there were a lot of issues with labour hire, it has certainly dampened a lot of the issues that were there before.

We work on exploitation and dodgy operators. We work with Australian Border Force, the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Australian Taxation Office's Phoenix Taskforce and other jurisdiction licensing schemes. Our cooperation with them has been second to none and they have been able to uncover, at the federal level, some very dodgy practices that were occurring.

I would also like to update the committee on work occurring nationally as part of the Albanese government reform agenda whereby we will be harmonising the approach to national labour hire regulation. We will still be operating our Queensland system in a harmonised way, because we are so far advanced when compared to other states. While I continue to advocate for a nationally harmonised scheme with model laws, we will not displace the Queensland scheme. Our nation-leading scheme will continue to operate independently, consistent with a nationally harmonised model. The Miles government is serious about tackling the exploitation of Queensland workers. I look forward to many more years of our nation-leading scheme's successful operation. Thank you for that. It is a very important part of what we inherited when we came to government—

**Mr McDONALD:** Ten years ago.

**Ms GRACE:**—and it has been seen as the blueprint. In 10 years we have done an absolutely fantastic job in relation to this area. It is nation and world leading. We are very proud of it. Thank you, member; I take that interjection.

**Mr ANDREW:** With reference to page 4 of the SDS and the department's role in creating safe workplaces, Central Queensland coalmine workers and their families have once again been exposed to unacceptable levels of workplace risk with the recent fire at Grosvenor mine. This has now happened not once but twice in what appears to be exactly the same circumstances to the accident four years ago. Fortunately, no-one was physically injured. Can the minister please explain why the inspector's investigation reports for Grosvenor of 6 May 2020 and 8 June 2020 have never been released by the RSHQ inspectorate?

**Ms GRACE:** I know that you have a concern, and I do not blame you. I share your concern, but it is not my jurisdiction. It comes under the resources minister. Mine safety is a separate entity. We look after workplace health and safety in every other area except mine safety. The independent prosecutor can now take referrals in relation to prosecutions. Obviously, if they are referred that comes under our jurisdiction. We now share the independent prosecutor, but I am not the minister responsible for mining health and safety. It is the resources minister. I suggest that when the minister is in front of estimates you ask him that question. He is privy to all of that investigation and all of those reports. My department has enough covering the rest of the field and the mining sector is separate. I understand that might be a bit confusing, but I thank the member for the question. I know that he is concerned for the safety of mineworkers, as I am as minister, and so is Minister Stewart.

**Mr ANDREW:** I have a question from the last block, if you would not mind taking it.

**CHAIR:** No, you cannot do that.

**Ms GRACE:** I am in the hands of the chair, member.

**CHAIR:** You will need to put that question on notice. Do you have a question about IR?

**Mr ANDREW:** That was it, thank you.

**CHAIR:** Feel free to write to the minister or place a question on notice for the next parliamentary session.

**Mr BROWN:** Minister, how is the Miles government backing the public sector?

**Ms GRACE:** Obviously we have an incredible enterprise bargaining agreement. As I mentioned when the member for South Brisbane asked me a question, we have cost-of-living relief. We have reproductive leave. We led the nation with domestic and family violence leave. We have some of the best conditions in the country for our public sector workers; we are very proud of that. We want to make sure that our public servants work in a productive, safe area where they feel valued, and that is what we have been doing. Thank you for the question.

We also have a number of cost-of-living measures, which back in the old days used to be called the 'social wage'. Savings on power bills, a 20 per cent reduction in rego and our 50-cent fares all go towards the cost of living that everyone is experiencing at the moment. The \$1,000 rebate—\$1,672 for vulnerable workers—and the \$200 vouchers that I am sure a lot of public servants will use for their children are all part of cost-saving arrangements to support them. We have health and safety laws which apply to them. We have bargains struck for all of our areas. I think there is one that expires next year.

We have 50,000 nurses, over 52,100 teachers, doctors, firefighters, police and public servants. We not only made wage-alone increases but we also committed to pay the government's superannuation contribution of 12.75 per cent from 1 July 2023, regardless of the level of contribution an employee makes. Before that, to get the 12.75 per cent it was subject to them putting in five per cent. Federally it is 11 per cent at the moment. We now pay 12.75 per cent regardless of the co-contribution. There has been a lot of good work done. Thank you, member, for the question.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. That concludes the committee's examination of estimates for the industrial relations portfolio. We have no questions on notice. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of racing open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I welcome the member for Everton.

**Mr MANDER:** Happy estimates, everybody.

**Ms GRACE:** Welcome, member.

**Mr MANDER:** My first questions will be to the acting commissioner of QRIC. Did QRIC finish with a surplus or deficit for the 2023-24 financial year and, if so, what were the amounts?

**Mr Letts:** I thank the member for the question. Is your question in relation to the budget situation for the 2023-24 year in terms of the end-of-year position?

**Mr MANDER:** Correct.

**Mr Letts:** Thank you. You will forgive me a little bit of hesitation; I am a month into the job.

**Mr MANDER:** To clarify: not the budget but the actuals.

**Mr Letts:** The actuals are yet to be finalised. You will appreciate that we are not at the financial year end at this point in time. We still have a period and a half to finalise the 2023-24 financial position, so I am not able to answer that question with any accuracy at this point in time.

**Mr MANDER:** Could you advise what the situation was after the end of May with regards to the year to date, same question?

**Mr Letts:** In terms of the year-to-date position I do not have that information in front of me at the moment. I apologise for that. I was of the understanding we were looking at the SDS for the forthcoming year.

**Mr MANDER:** We are looking at the financial performance. Can we take that on notice?

**CHAIR:** We will get something to you.

**Ms GRACE:** We will try to get something to you by the end of the session. Can I clarify? Member for Everton, are you just after up until the May date? Is that the second part of your question?

**Mr MANDER:** I would like to the end of the financial year, but if you do not have that yet, then the latest figures that you have.

**Ms GRACE:** We will endeavour to get that. I think you mentioned May or whatever. Until all the annual reports are all done—we will try to get that to you by the end. We can ask the team to have a look at that.

**Mr MANDER:** Acting Commissioner, I am led to believe that QRIC is probably around \$6 million to \$7 million over budget. Is that consistent with your knowledge with regard to how they have been tracking this last financial year?

**Mr Letts:** I thank the member for the question. As I said previously, we do not have an absolutely clear position in relation to the end of the financial year. The position I have been advised on to this point in time is that the way the expenditure has been tracking it is a little over budget. I cannot give you a figure at this point, but we will give you the end of May figure.

**Mr MANDER:** Acting Commissioner, it is my understanding that the former commissioner commissioned KPMG to look at other funding models or sustainable funding models. Do you know anything about that review or any outcomes from that review?

**Mr Letts:** I understand there was a piece of work that was commissioned. I do not have the findings of that piece of work in relation to the sustainable funding model but there is, as you would be aware, a separate piece of work that KPMG has undertaken on behalf of the minister.

**Mr MANDER:** Has it been completed?

**Mr Letts:** The first piece of work?

**Mr MANDER:** No, we are talking about two separate ones here.

**Mr Letts:** We are.

**Mr MANDER:** We are talking about the model with regards to sustainable funding which I believe the former commissioner had commissioned KPMG to do. At the moment I am interested in that particular piece of work.

**Mr Letts:** Can I take that question on notice as well? I know that there was a budget allocation assigned to it but I do not have the specifics.

**Ms GRACE:** I can answer that, Chair.

**Mr MANDER:** I will give you the opportunity in a moment, Minister.

**Ms GRACE:** No, rather than looking into it, I can answer it now. My understanding is that the finance part of KPMG was done and that the department has been in consultation with QRIC about the ongoing funding. We have seen racing really expand over the years—100 per cent since we came into government—so we are looking at the funding model and how we can make sure that adequate funds are available for QRIC to conduct the great work they do.

**Mr MANDER:** I will go back to the acting commissioner. Let's talk about the second piece of KPMG work, which is the holistic review. Have you received a copy of that final review, Assistant Commissioner?

**Mr Letts:** I have.

**Mr MANDER:** What recommendations have been made to the government and where are we at with regards to implementing those?

**Ms GRACE:** Member for Everton, the review in relation to the operations really come under the department, under DAF. The QRIC commissioner is not the jurisdiction overseeing that, so there might be a conflict in that question to him.

**Mr MANDER:** All right. Let's go direct to—

**Ms GRACE:**—or you could go to the director-general of DAF.

**Mr MANDER:** No, I will go to you, if that is okay. Could you tell me about the review? Has it been completed, when was it completed and when did you know about the review? I am not interested in the contents at the moment, just the timing.

**Ms GRACE:** I know. There is a question on notice in relation to this. An independent best practice review of integrity and welfare services was announced in December last year. That review has been concluded. We are looking at the report at the moment in relation to the areas operationally that they believe need to be strengthened or where practices need to be improved. We are working with the department through that. It was an extensive review interviewing stakeholders, past and present staff and looking at a number of areas.

Member for Everton, if you are just after a general answer, we are looking at our response in relation to that. In anticipation of the government's consideration, an implementation oversight committee has been established for a period of up to 12 months to guide the preparation of the government's response to the review and oversee the implementation of the program of works. Yes, it has been completed and we are looking at our response through this implementation committee.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, why has the review not been made public?

**Ms GRACE:** As I said, we are working through that at the moment. We wanted to make sure that everyone who contributed to that review had the confidentiality to do that, because we interviewed past and current employees. We are just looking to see what part of that we can put out without breaching their confidentiality. We are working on that through the implementation committee and our response and we will get that out as soon as possible.

**Mr MANDER:** I am not sure if you mentioned it before—and sorry if I did not pick it up—but for how long have you had the review?

**Ms GRACE:** The review was delivered to the department on 3 May.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, does the recent departure of Mr Gillard from the position of the head of QRIC demonstrate that the findings were damning?

**Ms GRACE:** I do not really want to comment on that. Mr Gillard decided that he would resign. He has resigned. There are issues that have been raised which we will be looking at addressing; there is no doubt about that. Not only did Mr Gillard resign but the assistant commissioner has resigned. I welcome the acting commissioner and the acting assistant commissioner. I accepted both of those resignations. There have been some issues that were raised in the report. We will make it public and we do want to work through those.

**Mr MANDER:** How much did the review cost?

**Ms GRACE:** I think I have a figure. I will try to ascertain that for you. I do not have it at my fingertips. We have it here. The cost was over \$110,000 co-funded by DAF and the Department of State Development and Infrastructure. It was a comprehensive review and was money well spent. QRIC has been in operation now since about 2018. It was timely for a review. I will be honest and say a number of issues were raised with me by stakeholders and I implemented that straight away after those issues were raised with me. It has been a very good review by KPMG. I think they did the financial parts first and through that exercise they were able to conduct the operational review in line with the terms of reference.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, when do you expect the review to be made public?

**Ms GRACE:** That is a good question. I think I tried to answer that before. We are working through that. We hope to make it public very soon. That is all I can give you at this point. There is confidentiality in there and I will not breach that confidentiality. A lot of stakeholders and the implementation committee are working on this. I intend to make it public. We are working through those issues.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, I go back to your previous comments in answer to the previous question when you talked about people commenting about QRIC. I have to say that QRIC is the issue that is raised the most in my engagement with stakeholders. It seems to be in a state of upheaval at the moment. They do not have a leader. Last year there was a huge turnover of staff. This year further senior staff have resigned: general counsel, manager of finance futures, the lead vet of equine and the principal adviser of HR. There are other senior staff on stress leave. Is this a \$40 million a year basket case?

**CHAIR:** Wait. Stop. You were doing pretty well up until that. Member for Everton, you have drawn a number of inferences. I understand where you are going. I guide you to ask the questions without straying into any potential inferences or imputations. I will allow the minister to answer as she sees fit.

**Ms GRACE:** There have been concerns. When it comes to their stewarding and their administration of races, the report has found that that was all run well; they have been doing very well et cetera. There were issues around culture, staff and whatever else. They were the issues that were of concern to me when they were highlighted to me. As I said, I believe that the current acting commissioner and the current deputy commissioner are out in the marketplace at the moment to bring that about. The two who were there have resigned and those resignations have been accepted. We will work through all the recommendations to make sure that we get QRIC to where I want it to be. Issues were raised. I acted immediately. The report is in. We have an implementation committee and we are working through it.



Rest assured that at the moment they are in very good hands with Acting Commissioner Malcolm Letts and Acting Deputy Commissioner Chantal Raine. I am very confident at the moment. A recruitment process is being undertaken as a matter of priority. I think I accepted the resignation of the Racing Integrity Commissioner, Shane Gillard, in June, so we are now going through that process. If you are asking me whether I had concerns, absolutely—and that is why I acted the way that I did. When it comes to stewardship and all of that, QRIC has been doing a very good job and the industry has grown, as I said, member for Everton, with the latest reports showing 100 per cent since 2015.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, I am not sure whether you can answer this question or one of your officials can. Can you advise how much the point-of-consumption tax raised last financial year?

**Ms GRACE:** Sure. I can give you those figures. As you know, we are leading the nation in the return of point-of-consumption tax. In 2023-24, \$251 million was returned from the state's betting tax revenue to the racing industry.

**Mr MANDER:** Sorry, but that was not my question. My question was how much was raised.

**Ms GRACE:** They get 80 per cent of the point-of-consumption tax. The total amount raised—

**CHAIR:** There is a question on notice on this very issue as well, I think question No. 15.

**Ms GRACE:** What I get privy to is the 80 per cent point-of-consumption tax. Taxation raises the revenue. We get 80 per cent of the point-of-consumption tax given to the racing industry.

**Mr MANDER:** I know that. That is why I am asking the question.

**Ms GRACE:** The total amount is probably a Treasury figure that should have been raised with Treasury yesterday. I will certainly try to get that to you by the end of the session.

**Mr MANDER:** What I would like to know is—

**Ms GRACE:** Of the \$251 million, what is the full 100 per cent—

**Mr MANDER:** Correct.

**Ms GRACE:**—that is raised out of the point-of-consumption tax.

**Mr MANDER:** Correct.

**Ms GRACE:** Okay. Can we get that figure, please?

**Mr MANDER:** So \$251 million is the 80 per cent; is that what you are telling me?

**Ms GRACE:** Yes, the betting tax revenue to the racing industry. Racing Queensland will reflect \$262.4 million in its published 2023-24 revenues from betting taxes. That includes revenue from 2023-24 to be paid to RQ in 2024-25, but I believe in 2023-24 \$251 million was returned. There have been some adjustments when we made the adjustments to the 80 per cent point-of-consumption from the 35 per cent—one of the most generous. No-one is anywhere near what we are giving here in Queensland—nowhere near it.

**Mr MANDER:** I ask for the head of Racing Queensland to come to the table to answer questions. Mr Scott, is the current funding model for RQ sufficient to meet the operational and infrastructure needs of the industry into the future?

**CHAIR:** That is a pretty broad question. There is a lot of opinion in it.

**Mr MANDER:** It is. It is a question.

**CHAIR:** Let me finish. Mr Scott could answer that in a broad sense.

**Mr Scott:** With regard to the funding model we are at a point of change, because we had done a deal with the government long before I started here about the resumption from Albion Park. That was going to provide \$120 million into the coffers of Racing Queensland. When Albion Park was deemed superfluous for the needs of the Olympics, we did not receive that money. Albion Park was not needed, but we were already building a greyhound facility at Yamanto. Given that, there is a short-term need for an adjustment. Long term, discussions need to be made about the number of tracks and that, but short term it is not a problem. It is just a matter of what has happened due to Albion Park.

**Ms GRACE:** You still have the assets.

**Mr Scott:** That is right.

**Mr MANDER:** Yes. Minister, I hear concerns in the industry about infrastructure needs not being met. The very obvious one which you would know of is the grandstand and potential event centre at the Brisbane Racing Club, but it is right through to race clubs in country racing—places like Stamford, outside of Hughenden, where a recent meet was called off or could not be run because of star-picket outside barriers, and that is happening right across the board. Sometimes that is costing up to \$180,000

or \$200,000 to fix those and they cannot do it. The very fabric of racing in the country but right through to the city seems to be under threat with regard to being able to provide the infrastructure that is required. Have you any comment about how that can be met in the future?

**Ms GRACE:** Thank you, member for Everton, for the question. I do not think country racing has ever been more supported, due to what has been put in legislation by this government. Never in its history has country racing received the infrastructure spend and the moneys that they have had. When I meet the country—

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, once-a-year meetings are being cancelled.

**Ms GRACE:** But they may be cancelled for a variety of reasons.

**Mr MANDER:** But they are and I have stated that—

**CHAIR:** Member, cease your interjections.

**Ms GRACE:** But they may be cancelled for a variety of reasons, member for Everton. There have been some changes to safety, and star-picket fencing is now no longer required. I know that Racing Queensland is working with all of the clubs to be sure that we have safety rails for the jockeys in those clubs. We cannot remove them all overnight. My understanding is that we have had a fair go—and I could get an update from Mr Jason Scott in relation to where that is at—but there have been some changes only recently in relation to those, so we are working through them. Country racing has increased substantially under this government in terms of their support, and the infrastructure they have received is extraordinary with regard to what moneys have been given in relation to that.

Obviously, we have assets which were earmarked for use for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. They are now no longer required, such as the Albion Park site, and we will be working with the industry on that infrastructure going forward. We have a very healthy infrastructure spend. The money that has been spent on racetracks right throughout Queensland, such as the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast, has been extraordinary. Going forward, we need to review where we are heading, and I am really looking forward to doing that. We will regroup about Albion and we are building one of the safest tracks in the world when it comes to the Q.

**CHAIR:** There is time for a very brief last one, member for Everton.

**Mr MANDER:** I will go back to the Racing Queensland CEO. On the weekend a race meet was halted because of jockeys believing that the horses were being spooked as they came around to where the construction site was. Is that correct?

**Mr Scott:** Thank you for the opportunity to clarify this, because there has been a lot of misinformation in the press in the last 72 hours. We have known for a short period of time that there is a problem at the 600-metre mark at Eagle Farm, where horses are getting spooked and moving away. What we do not have is Mr Ed, the talking horse, to tell us exactly what they are being spooked by and exactly what the problem is. On Saturday after race 6 the jockeys withdrew their services and the last couple of races were abandoned. We will not race at Eagle Farm until we have got to a mitigation that the jockeys agree with. This week I have had multiple meetings with the jockeys, the trainers, the club and QRIC. We believe we have a solution.

Without going into too many details, horses are colourblind and that third building that is being constructed in Eagle Farm is covered in black mesh. The horses see that as a black hole, so we are working with Mirvac and the CFMEU on that site to change that mesh colour to blue. As I said, we have a lot of theories as to why it is happening, but we need to mitigate it to a point where the jockeys are comfortable riding. We will trial horses on that.

In terms of all of the horses that have had any of the problems, none of them are trained at Eagle Farm. They will get acclimatised to that by cantering them past that area at the start. There are lots of little mitigations, but it is something that we think we can fix. We will race a few meetings at Doomben if need be or move to the Sunshine Coast until the jockeys are 100 per cent certain that it is safe.

**Mr MANDER:** Is one of the theories that there may have been hundreds of CFMEU flags that were fluttering in the wind?

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, we have run out of time. We will ignore that question.

**Ms GRACE:** Chair, can I clarify something? I do not know what the member heard but I thought I said '510,000' for the KPMG review. Some people thought that maybe I said '110'. I want to clarify that.

**Mr MANDER:** You did say '110'.

**Ms GRACE:** I am so sorry. It is '510'. I have the figure in front of me. I misspoke. Can I fix that?

**CHAIR:** That is fine; we have that. Member for Traeger, do you have a question?

**Mr KATTER:** This question is to the CEO. I should start by saying that prior to your tenure there were a number of issues with track redevelopment, namely at Charters Towers and Charleville, and, as I understand it, personnel being moved on. Do you see that impacting on the ability to do upgrades that are required in some of those country regions moving forward, that has been sunk into those projects?

**Mr Scott:** Thank you for that question. It is fantastic because I spoke to Sally Kirkwood yesterday and we are going to run our first meeting at Charters Towers on Saturday. Nominations have been very strong.

**Mr KATTER:** She has done a great job.

**Mr Scott:** In terms of personnel, we have a team now that potentially is probably not large enough for the size and scope of 120 race tracks around Queensland. We are not getting to particularly the once- and twice-a-year tracks enough. We will look at bolstering that so we have basically have more numbers on the ground and are getting to the country tracks not just six weeks out and then two weeks out as we do; I think we need to be there 12 weeks out because different tracks need a different amount of work. The quality is fine; the quantity I am working to bolster.

**Mr KATTER:** Moving forward, it has long been my view that those country race meets are a completely different animal, but they are lumped in with a lot of the larger metropolitan meets in terms of funding models to some extent. Is there any plan to change the view? Perhaps that is more a policy issue for the minister, but you might want to have a go at that first.

**Mr Scott:** I think the funding comes out of one pool or two pools—it does not really matter. What we need to understand as a racing industry is that the minimum standards and expectations in 2024 are not even what they were in 2018. I would suggest one of the greatest challenges to racing in the next 10, 20 or 30 years is insurance. Fewer and fewer people are willing to offer coverage. The death of a horse or the death of a jockey at Stamford or Aramac is the same as at Eagle Farm. We need to be cognisant that the minimum standards at country tracks are stronger than what we have had before.

On funding, we certainly need to work on how we fund them and in what way because that minimum standard means it is taking more money to keep the tracks at a standard where it is safe and, more importantly, that we should be racing at. Racing Queensland wants to race as many as we can. The member for Everton mentioned Stamford but we made sure we ran that race at Hughenden. It is not about not running races for us; it is making sure that we are running them at a place where we are going to get safe racing for horse and human.

**CHAIR:** Member for South Brisbane, do you have a quick question and we will need a quick response?

**Dr MacMAHON:** My question is for the minister. What consideration has the government given to outlawing the use of discarded racing greyhounds for teaching and research purposes?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the member for the question. I know that we are very much working on ensuring that we have some of the safest tracks for our greyhound racing industry. The Q will be the world's, second-to-none, safest track with animal welfare and veterinary provisions on board. The racing authority oversees greyhounds from birth to retirement in Queensland, as recommended by the MacSporran report. Once a greyhound is privately retired, QRIC cannot track them for privacy reasons, obviously. At this point, jurisdiction oversight shifts to other authorities such as local councils. Owners have several venues to retire their greyhounds including QRIC's Greyhound Adoption Program. I am really happy to say that we have had the biggest number of adoptions of greyhounds with 455 successfully adopted in 2023-24.

Most greyhounds are retired as pets. However, in some instances they are provided to institutions such as university veterinary facilities for research and teaching. In these cases, those institutions are required to follow their own animal welfare guidelines. There are strict guidelines on how they are used in these institutions. To be honest with you, I have not had any complaints come to me in relation to any mismanagement of that. We will obviously look at anything that comes forward. Thank you for the question.

**CHAIR:** We have not had any questions from the government members so we will run five minutes over. Firstly, I will go to the member for Bundaberg.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, I know that your favourite day of the year is coming up on Saturday, which of course is the Lindsay Australia Bundaberg Cup Race Day—the most important day on the racing calendar. Can you advise how the Miles government is continuing to support racing clubs in Queensland?

**Ms GRACE:** Thank you, member. I do love the Bundaberg cup. I have been there a few times with the member for Bundaberg. He knows what a strong supporter I am of local racing clubs.

Racing Queensland continues to go from strength to strength. New data has shown the racing industry contributed \$2.4 billion to the state's economy in 2022-23. That represents a 100 per cent increase under this Labor government from \$1.2 billion in 2015-16. It has been a remarkable turnaround. We came in with the MacSporran report and there were terrible incidents of animal cruelty. We have been able to turn that around.

Country racing has also thrived under this Labor government. Our previous country racing program provided \$105 million to support country racing thoroughbred races over the six years. I know the member for Traeger loves his country race and we got it. We have put the money up and we are certainly supporting them. That equates to country racing providing \$17.6 million for country racing per year over the period.

Our betting tax reforms obviously have increased the amount. As a result, we have legislated a higher minimum funding level for country racing now. It is in legislation, indexed to \$20.8 million in 2024-25. That is a floor, not a ceiling, with Racing Queensland expending a total of \$26.4 million in 2023-24 on country racing to support operational costs, prize money, jockey riding fees, superannuation and workers compensation expenses.

RQ also provides a further \$3 million per annum in infrastructure grants through its Country Club Asset Funding program. Chair, it gives me great pleasure to announce today the successful recipients of \$5.7 million worth of new funding through two different grant programs to further support racing clubs. I have absolutely no doubt that the \$3 million in annual funding will provide country racing with great assets. This year's allocation will see 36 country clubs sharing \$3 million worth of grants to support 41 projects.

We will fund running rail installations at Bundaberg Race Club, Birdsville Race Club, Burrandowan Picnic Race Club and Gordonvale Turf Club. There is funding for new barrier stalls at Julia Creek Turf Club in Traeger, Morven Race Club and Yeppoon Turf Club. Dawson Jockey Club and Mount Isa Race Club will get judges facilities upgrades and new stewards towers for Birdsville Race Club and the Gladstone Turf Club. Burdekin Race Club, Cooktown Amateur Turf Club and Cunnamulla & Districts Diggers Race Club will get new tie-up stalls thanks to this funding.

Racing Queensland is also supporting multiple projects at 18 TAB thoroughbred, greyhound and harness racing clubs thanks to our \$2.7 million from its asset management funding. Other projects being funded include new tie-up stalls and a tack room at the Lockyer Valley Turf Club in the electorate of Lockyer—

**Mr McDONALD:** Hear, hear!

**Ms GRACE:** Hear, hear, as well—an upgrade to the jockeys room at the Mackay Turf Club, a new machinery shed at Cairns Jockey Club, irrigation pumps at the Toowoomba Turf Club, new barrier stalls at Kilcoy Race Club and new lure rails at the Townsville Greyhound Racing Club. You can see that all these projects add to an incredible experience. Chair, this government understands the importance of country racing to regional communities. That is why we are continuing to invest in these facilities and the infrastructure that country clubs need to thrive and prosper. We have been doing that since we were elected.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, very much. Minister, we have some outstanding questions on notice. Answers will be due at 5 pm on 26 July. One relates to the costs of the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme. Have we done that one?

**Ms GRACE:** I think the DG has something.

**Mr Fraine:** The cost of the Pioneer Valley pumped hydro scheme we ascertained was a cost for the relevant line agency department. We certainly were aware of the current costs, noting that there is work underway.

**CHAIR:** That is good. Another was the cost of the temporary structures for QSAC.

**Ms GRACE:** The \$1.6 billion cost estimate was developed as part of the independent Sport Venue Review. This includes an investment in the new permanent stadium and infrastructure related to stadium and precinct works, and road and trunk services for a facility capable of hosting national,

state and community level events. Other permanent infrastructure to support overlay include pedestrian connections, enhanced plaza works, podium, concourse, broadcast—we have included everything in the \$1 billion. I think that this is the issue that was questioned by the vice-president of the IOC at the time because, when other costings were made for other alternatives, all of this was not included, as I read out on the transcript from the report. Infrastructure upgrades including to support overlay requirements for the games include costs related to temporary stands and transport, bus stops—it really included everything. We need to really scrutinise that. Under the project validation report currently underway we will look at all of this with the IOC for Brisbane 2032 and are organising to optimise stadium outcomes.

**CHAIR:** We have an answer to that. The last one was a figure in relation to the point-of-consumption tax.

**Ms GRACE:** Yes, we have a figure of around 294.78. What happens is that a true-up is done. Once we land on exactly what that figure is then the 80 per cent is given. There has been a true-up amount of about \$5 million that we looked at through Treasury. When all of that comes in and when the end of financial year amounts are done, the 80 per cent is then worked out with Racing Queensland, a true-up is done and they get their full 80 per cent.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. We have now reached the end of the time allocated for the consideration of the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Minister for State Development and Infrastructure, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing. Minister, did you want to give some thank-yous before we sign off?

**Ms GRACE:** Very quickly, Chair, I place on record my sincere thanks to those who have worked so hard to assist us ahead of today. Preparing for estimates is an extensive undertaking. It would not be possible without the support of the staff from my Department of State Development and Infrastructure, including the Office of the Coordinator-General, EDQ, the Games Venue and Legacy Delivery Authority, the Office of Industrial Relations, Racing Queensland, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission.

Thank you to my ministerial staff for their constant and loyal support, particularly my Chief Of Staff, Katelyn Dougherty. Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, as well as the committee secretariat, staff and Hansard. As I always maintain, it is an absolute privilege to be part of the estimates process. Thank you all for your time today. In particular, thank you to my director-general, Graham Fraine, and my deputy director-general, Natalie Wilde. Thank you very much to everyone.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. The committee will now adjourn until 1.30 pm when we will examine the estimates for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Public Works.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.52 pm to 1.30 pm.**

## ESTIMATES—HOUSING, BIG BUILD AND MANUFACTURING COMMITTEE— HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PLANNING; PUBLIC WORKS

### In Attendance

Hon. MA Scanlon, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Public Works

Ms C Manton, Chief of Staff

Ms A Van Butzelaar, Senior Policy Advisor

Ms S Nichols, Senior Policy Advisor

#### **Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning and Public Works**

Mr M Cridland, Director-General

Mr J Hannan, Deputy Director-General, Local Government

Ms A Masson, Deputy Director-General, Housing and Homelessness Services

Ms D McAllister, Deputy Director-General, Policy, Performance and First Nations

Ms T Pickering, Deputy Director-General, Planning Group

Mr S Betros, Acting Deputy Director-General, Social and Affordable Housing Growth

Ms A Proberts, Senior Director, Office of the Director General

Mr G Atkins, Deputy Director-General, Public Works

#### **Residential Tenancies Authority**

Ms J Smith, Chief Executive Officer

#### **Queensland Building and Construction Commission**

Ms A Levy, Chief Executive Officer and Commissioner



**CHAIR:** Good afternoon. We will now resume proceedings. For the benefit of those who have just joined us, I am Chris Whiting, the member for Bancroft and chair of the committee. With me today are: Mr Jim McDonald, the member for Lockyer and deputy chair; Mr Don Brown, the member for Capalaba; Mr Michael Hart, the member for Burleigh, Mr Robbie Katter, the member for Traeger; and Mr Tom Smith, the member for Bundaberg. The committee will be 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 chair's discretion or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for the broadcast 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, and I ask all present 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 are not permitted in the chamber.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2024 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Public Works until 5.45 pm. We will adjourn for a short break from 3.30 pm to 3.45 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the time 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.

I also 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 182 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 for Housing, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Public Works, the director-general, the officials, departmental officers, staff and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials and advisers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or director-general.

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

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

**Ms SCANLON:** Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, committee members and staff. I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we are gathered here today—the Yagara and Turrbal people—and pay my deepest respects to elders past, present and emerging.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here in front of the committee today to talk about something that is central to every Queenslanders and this government through our Homes for Queenslanders plan. Being entrusted to serve Queenslanders as the housing, local government, planning and public works minister in the Miles Labor government is something I have not taken lightly, because being the minister means doing what matters for Queensland: building more homes faster, helping first home owners, supporting Queensland renters, boosting our social housing big build and working towards ending homelessness.

Launching our Homes for Queenslanders plan was one of the first things that our new Premier did. It set an evidence-based blueprint to deliver one million more homes, including 53,500 social homes—the most ambitious undertaking in the state's history. Being ambitious is what we need to be. Record interstate and international migration, successive interest rate rises, international conflicts and recovering from a pandemic have monumentally shifted Queensland's housing landscape. What Queenslanders cannot risk now is an alternative that is built simply on slogans and a track record of cuts and austerity.

Our Homes for Queenslanders plan has been recognised across the board and even interstate. We had the peak body for homelessness in New South Wales applauding our approach, the Queensland Council of Social Service describing our plan as nation leading and the Northern Territory Property Council calling on its own government to copy our plan. Hal Pawson, a professor of housing research and policy, and a name well recognised in housing circles, wrote that Queensland can 'reasonably claim to be leading the way on long-term, evidence informed planning of social housing investment'.

Since we have launched our plan, Queenslanders have seen us deliver on what matters to them. We have slashed stamp duty for first home buyers and doubled the First Home Owner Grant. We have passed reforms to better protect renters by banning all forms of rent bidding and laid the foundations for a code of conduct after the member for Kawana and the LNP tore it up.

We have increased financial support for renters with a \$160 million rent relief package to help them find and keep a home. We have listened to our hardworking homelessness organisations and given them a record 20 per cent uplift, in recognition of the really important work that they do. Through a \$526 million investment, we are offering and providing emergency accommodation for people sleeping rough while we work with them on longer term housing.

We have tradies on the tools, with close to 1,000 social homes under construction right now across the state. We have delivered thousands of social homes, like the 40-room Townsville Youth Foyer and 33-home complex for First Nations women and children in Brisbane. There has never been more money for community housing providers and faith-based organisations as we deliver homes in partnership with them, like the new 40-home precinct in Little Mountain, which the member for Caloundra officially opened with Churches of Christ recently.

Through our Housing Investment Fund, we are backing community housing providers, faith-based organisations and institutional investors to build social and affordable homes. Queenslanders will have seen plenty of new projects announced through the fund, like 26 modular homes in Central Queensland in partnership with Anglicare, 32 new homes for seniors in Hervey Bay with local developer Shorelyne, and the purchase of 85 homes in Gladstone with local community housing provider Roseberry. Using our Housing Investment Fund to purchase homes while we build is something we know is delivering.

The opposition leader and the LNP say that they want to unleash the community housing sector but in the same sentence criticise these providers for buying homes through the Housing Investment Fund. You cannot have it both ways. We will continue to purchase vacant retirement villages, hotels and motels, like the 60-room hotel in South Brisbane where young mums and older women are getting a new start in life with wraparound support from Vinnies.

We know that the best thing we can do to deliver more homes for Queenslanders is to unlock supply. On average, per quarter, our government has approved, commenced and built more homes than when the LNP was in government, and we are not letting up. We have set targets for councils to meet and deliver on when it comes to well-located homes, backing them in with billions of dollars in funding for infrastructure partnerships. We have listened to industry, slashing red tape to fast-track approvals and stepping in to help by providing essential services like roads, stormwater and sewerage so that shovels can get in the ground faster. I look forward to having the opportunity to update the committee on some of these initiatives today.

We have also led the way with innovation, like utilising our public builder QBuild and partnering with Queensland businesses to deliver modular homes. They can be built in rain, hail or shine and faster than a traditional build. We have committed to 600 more and we are delivering more than 100 as part of the pilot.

Before I wrap up, I want to say to the committee that our 2024-25 state budget locks in funding for our Homes for Queenslanders plan, including record investment of \$2.8 billion in housing for the 2024-25 financial year, and it shows that we are serious about delivering—

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair: that is six minutes. He was being kind.

**CHAIR:** Yes, we are wrapped up now.

**Ms SCANLON:** I am happy to finish, Chair. I have a lot to say and am happy to answer questions.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. I will now go to questions.

**Mr MANDER:** My first series of questions will be to the director-general. Director-General, in the 2023-24 financial year, how many people were put into a social housing property and subsequently removed from the Social Housing Register?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. As at 31 March 2024—so for the first three-quarters—4,000 people were assisted into social housing.

**Mr MANDER:** Just to clarify, Director-General, were those 4,000 subsequently removed from the social housing waiting list register?

**Mr Cridland:** If you are talking about, yes, when they are placed they would come off the register of need.

**Mr MANDER:** 4,000?

**Mr Cridland:** We have assisted 4,000 into social housing, so they no longer need to be on the register.

**Mr MANDER:** It is an even 4,000?

**Mr Cridland:** I think that is right, yes. That is the advice I have.

**Mr MANDER:** I have a further question.

**Mr Cridland:** Sorry, over 4,000, if I can clarify, member. Apologies.

**Mr MANDER:** Can I get further clarification? Over 4,000 could be 5,000. Can we get a more accurate figure?

**Mr Cridland:** Yes, we will get a more accurate figure for you.

**Mr MANDER:** On a similar theme, Director-General, in the last financial year how many people were removed from the register without being allocated a house?

**Mr Cridland:** Just to answer your prior question, it is 4,028. In terms of applications that were cancelled, it was 3,990 for various reasons. That is again to 31 March.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, in the last financial year and obviously up until March it would seem, how many people were added to the Social Housing Register?

**Mr Cridland:** I can advise that 5,594 were added to the register as at 31 March 2024.



**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, how often do you and your departmental executive have visibility on these types of figures? How accessible are they?

**Mr Cridland:** We can access them daily, if needed.

**Mr MANDER:** Daily.

**Mr Cridland:** Yes.

**Mr MANDER:** So why does it take four months to report on the previous quarter's figures?

**Mr Cridland:** When we are reporting, there are tens of thousands of lines of personal information and detail that has to be de-identified and quality checked before we are allowed to publish it due to privacy rules. That takes a lot of time to de-identify all of those individual records to come up with the detail that is published on open data.

**Mr MANDER:** Sorry, you will have to educate me about that. Can I ask for more information? You have the raw numbers basically at your fingertips but you have to de-identify what?

**Mr Cridland:** Every individual record has to be de-identified because there are people on that list who are victims of domestic and family violence. There are families with children escaping dangerous situations. We do not want anyone to be able to identify who is on that list or where they may be. We have to go through every individual record that is on the list and de-identify it and then quality check it before it can be published.

**Mr MANDER:** I would like further clarification for my education. Are you telling me that the Social Housing Register is available for public access to look at individual's names?

**Mr Cridland:** No, I am not saying that at all.

**Mr MANDER:** Please explain to me the de-identification process.

**Mr Cridland:** You are asking about why it only gets published on open data quarterly.

**Mr MANDER:** No, I am not asking that. I am asking why isn't the information available immediately at the end of the quarter—the raw data with regard to what the public housing waiting list is?

**Mr Smith:** That was not the member's initial question.

**Mr MANDER:** Well it is my question now.

**Mr Smith:** Now he is badgering the witness.

**Mr MANDER:** I am seeking clarification.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, everyone. The member for Everton is clarifying what he is after. Feel free to keep clarifying that. Clearly Mr Cridland will answer as best as he can.

**Mr MANDER:** I want to go back to that original clarification. The raw figures are available. People's personal details are not public with regard to open data. I cannot understand why some process delays information that is readily available at your fingertips?

**Ms SCANLON:** Chair, if I could—

**Mr MANDER:** No. My question is to the director-general.

**CHAIR:** Whoa! I am in control here. We will come to the minister in a moment, if need be. Mr Cridland, do you want to add anything to that?

**Mr Cridland:** I will do my best to answer. It is at the end of the quarter when we close the register and take that data and commence the process of de-identifying and quality checks. While that data is available to us, in terms of the format that is published quarterly on open data source—which is an extensive amount of data—it takes a period of time from the end of the quarter to de-identify every record and quality check it before it can then be published. That is the answer.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, when was that process completed for the March data?

**Mr Cridland:** I do not have that to hand. I will try to find out and come back to you before the end of the session.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, last Friday the opposition came out and asked for the social housing figures for the end of March, as had been promised by you to publish them quarterly. You released that information that afternoon. Why do you only become transparent and open after pressure from the opposition and the media?

**Ms SCANLON:** I reject the premise of the question. What I would say is, in fact, I had released that data to a media outlet before the member for Everton had asked for that data.

**Mr Mander:** What an incredible coincidence!

**CHAIR:** No interjections.

**Ms SCANLON:** I had had that data for less than 10 days before it was publicly released. I would also make the point that I committed to quarterly data—something the LNP never called for and never did.

**Mr MANDER:** Our waiting list was not at 45,473 people!

**CHAIR:** Order, members!

**Ms SCANLON:** I am leading a more transparent process than the member for Everton ever did.

**Mr MANDER:** I have another question to the minister because the behaviour is consistent. Earlier in the week there was publicity about people living homeless at the Pine Rivers showgrounds. Lo and behold, what happened that afternoon? Departmental staff arrived. Why are you responsive only after the media and opposition highlight a particular issue?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. We fund an organisation Encircle to go out to that spot to do homelessness outreach and to offer accommodation. Once that particular issue was raised with me though, I asked the department to also go out to make sure that what we have funded this service to do was being done. Our department went out there and ensured that people were being offered accommodation, as is the government's policy. We continue to make sure that we offer anyone experiencing homelessness accommodation. It is my expectation—and I have made this very clear to homelessness services—that anyone presenting homeless should be offered accommodation. There will be circumstances though where people refuse that support, but we will continue to turn up and we will continue to offer that accommodation.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, when do we expect the figures for the June quarter will be available for public access?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. I would expect that to be around September-October.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, do you expect those figures to be available before the next state election?

**Ms SCANLON:** That is my intention because, as I said, I have committed to more regular reporting than the LNP ever did.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, so they will be released before the election but you know what those figures are right now?

**Mr Cridland:** Yes, I know what the total is right now but not the breakdown that is provided on open data.

**Mr MANDER:** Are you willing to disclose that figure?

**Mr Cridland:** I will check with the minister.

**Ms SCANLON:** They have not gone through the quality assurance process. My concern would be that the opposition would use that. If the number were different having gone through the quality assurance process, no doubt you would somehow try to suggest that something had happened with those numbers. There is a reason they go through a quality assurance process. I have committed to quarterly data—which is significantly more than the LNP ever did—and I will make sure that we deliver that.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, I suggest your concern is that the figure is a lot higher, and that would be embarrassing for the government.

**CHAIR:** That is clearly a comment.

**Mr MANDER:** It is a precursor to my next question.

**CHAIR:** It is preamble with a bit of an argumentative inference, but it would be great if you could please get to the question.

**Mr MANDER:** I will, thank you. Minister, just going back to that figure, 5,594 people have been added to the Social Housing Register in the nine months of this financial year. That is an extraordinarily high figure. Does that show the government's initiatives and policies are not maintaining pace with the increased demand for homes?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. As everyone knows, right now there is extraordinary pressure in the private housing market which means that people are coming forward to ask for support. I would also say that, while we build more homes, overwhelmingly people on the Social Housing Register are offered other support. We provide rental subsidies, rental grants. We have released our comprehensive Homes for Queenslanders plan—that has been backed in by all of the experts—that will meet need. It will meet need. That is extraordinary. No government has ever committed to that. That is what we are committed to delivering. The member for Everton's position may be to reduce the Social Housing Register by kicking people off of it, which I know was effectively the policy back in 2020 through his housing plan, which said that social housing should not be permanent; it should only be—

**Mr MANDER:** Are you referring to the 3,990 you culled in the last nine months? Is that what you are referring to?

**CHAIR:** The member for Everton will cease interjecting. The minister will finish.

**Ms SCANLON:** I will respond to the member's question. The policy that applies in relation to people who cannot be contacted is exactly the same policy as under the LNP.

**Mr MANDER:** Thank you.

**Ms SCANLON:** The policy that the member for Everton put forward was very different to what this government has. His policy was effectively to say that social housing should not be ongoing. I am happy to read from it. It said, 'An old feature of Queensland's social housing system was the view that social housing is a home forever.' The member for Everton's plan said there would be greater emphasis on social housing as a transitional period.

**Mr MANDER:** Correct: 'greater emphasis'. It does not mean that people will not be in social housing for life, because many will be. Our emphasis was on transitioning people into home ownership.

**CHAIR:** Member, do you have a question?

**Mr MANDER:** I am responding to the comment. It is an interjection.

**CHAIR:** No, you are asking a question.

**Mr MANDER:** The minister is gladly receiving it.

**Mr SMITH:** It is not an interjection.

**CHAIR:** I remind all members that this is not a conversation; these are questions and answers. Members are not to quarrel across the chamber. Under standing order 247, all comments are to be directed through the chair. Do you have another question?

**Mr MANDER:** I do. Let's change subjects. Director-General, I want to talk about the emergency hotel accommodation that is being offered. The opposition recently asked question on notice No. 776 of 2024 on this issue. The answer to the question, 'How many nights of hotel accommodation were offered last financial year?'—that is 2022-23—was '110,000 nights'. Will you advise the committee of the number of nights offered for the last financial year, 2023-24?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. The number of nights for short-term temporary accommodation provided from 1 July 2023 is 144,995, including 133,950 nights through our Immediate Housing Response, which is a 144 per cent increase on the year before.

**Mr MANDER:** Just to clarify, Director-General, nights went from 110,000 to 145,000 the following financial year?

**Mr Cridland:** I would have to check that question on notice, member.

**Mr MANDER:** That is fine. Director-General, in the same question on notice it was indicated by the minister that no estimate or forecast was available for the current financial year. Do you have any update on what might be expected this current financial year in the same category?

**Mr Cridland:** I know it is a demand-driven model. The government's commitment said that everyone who is willing to engage with us and willing to accept an offer of accommodation will be provided one. We have provided significant funding under the Immediate Housing Response to allow our specialist homelessness services to respond to that and meet it, but it is demand-driven.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, can I ask how you budget for that? Is it the same allocation as last year plus some, or how does that work?

**Mr Cridland:** No. The allocation for the Immediate Housing Response from 1 February, when the Homes for Queenslanders plan was released, until 30 June 2026 is \$205 million. That was done on some forecast, but I do not have that to hand. It is \$205 million for that period.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, last financial year, what was the median length of stay for someone staying in emergency hotel accommodation?

**Mr Cridland:** We measure that by region, so I will give you an example. In the Brisbane region, between 1 July 2023 and 31 March 2024 the average length of stay in emergency motel accommodation was 1.4 months.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, would you please advise which region has the highest median length of stay and how long that is?

**Mr Cridland:** Certainly, if you will just give me a moment to check. I believe it is the northern Queensland region, at 1.7 months.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, do you have a breakdown of what percentage of people in emergency hotel accommodation would have children with them?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. We measure it all by households, so that can be single-person households through to multi-person households. No, I do not have that breakdown to hand.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, would you have on record the longest period of time that someone or some household has been in emergency accommodation?

**Mr Cridland:** I might ask the deputy director-general of Housing and Homelessness Services to come forward. She may have that information to assist the committee.

**Ms Masson:** I thank the member for the question in relation to the longest period of time we have in relation to the Immediate Housing Response program. I do not have that figure to hand, but I will endeavour to have that with you before the end of the session.

**Mr MANDER:** Deputy Director-General, anecdotally I have heard of people in emergency hotel accommodation for up to 18 months. Is that something you have heard?

**Ms Masson:** I thank the member for the question. No, that is not a figure I have heard, but I will endeavour to get the longest period of time before the end of the session.

**Ms SCANLON:** Point of order, Chair: I think it needs to go through the director-general or myself.

**CHAIR:** Yes, exactly. If that number exists, it can be potentially furnished later.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, what process or policy framework is used to ensure that the hotels being offered as suitable for people requiring emergency accommodation are the best value for taxpayers' money?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. The hotels and motels are funded by our specialist homelessness services, the NGOs, so they determine what will best meet the needs of the cohorts they are servicing.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, my understanding is that the department also allocates people straight into emergency accommodation, so there must be some sort of process.

**Mr Cridland:** They are under different programs. We have a number of properties that we either headlease or have purchased on market, and of course they are all to the standard that we require. It is a different program.

**Mr MANDER:** Further clarification: is that in hotel accommodation, though?

**Mr Cridland:** Some of them are former hotels, yes, that we have acquired either through a headlease or through purchases—like the Park Hotel, for instance.

**Mr MANDER:** Not current hotel accommodation that is available for the public as well?

**Mr Cridland:** I might get the deputy director-general to clarify that for you. I do not think so. I think it is all through our SHSs, but I will check.

**Ms Masson:** Member, could I ask you to repeat the question?

**Mr MANDER:** The question is: does the department use hotel accommodation—not hotels that the government has bought but commercial hotel accommodation—for emergency homelessness accommodation?

**Ms Masson:** Yes, they do.

**Mr MANDER:** I am not sure you answered this before, Director-General, and forgive me if you did. What are the guidelines used to select appropriate accommodation that gives taxpayers the best value for their money?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. Just to clarify an earlier answer, the program I was referring to for our specialist homelessness services is Immediate Housing Response. It is all through them. We do have a regional discretionary fund through our housing service centres that does use it, which is what the deputy director-general said. I will refer to the deputy director-general to answer your question.

**Ms Masson:** In relation to determining what are the best hotels or motels to be used, we utilise different suppliers. We work through larger bookings to ensure that we can get bulk bookings to ensure that we are getting discounts. We work with different internet sites as well to ensure that we can validate that the prices are providing best value. We ensure that we are booking hotels that are meeting the needs of the customers who are presenting to our service centres so that we are booking appropriate accommodation based on the size of the household that does present.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, is there a price cap? Is there a maximum amount that would be spent per night with regard to this emergency hotel accommodation?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. What I can tell you is that the average nightly rate—because it is across many hundreds of rooms—from 1 July 2023 to 31 March 2024 was \$144.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, do you have one more question before we go to other questions?

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, I understand that one of the hotels used for emergency accommodation in Cairns is the Crystalbrook hotel chain. The website says—

... Crystalbrook Collection hotels, resorts and residences offer a taste of luxury with contemporary rooms and suites, 5-star facilities and unmissable culinary experiences.

Have there been any challenges with transitioning people from this style of emergency accommodation to more permanent options?

**CHAIR:** That is a pretty—

**Mr McDONALD:** It is a pretty straightforward question.

**CHAIR:** I am not sure how to classify that one. I am going to give the director-general some breadth in answering that one.

**Mr Cridland:** Thanks, Chair. I appreciate the question. I would have to confirm whether any of the Crystalbrook chains—I think there are three in Cairns and they vary in quality—have been used at all and what for. I will try to come back before the end of this session.

**Ms SCANLON:** If I can add, Chair—

**Mr MANDER:** I can help with clarification—

**CHAIR:** We will have clarification from the member and then to the minister.

**Mr MANDER:** The deputy chair will table a document which is the minutes of the department of housing's Cairns place-based response team.

**Mr McDONALD:** I will table that, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Hang on, we will examine this. You have the minutes of a meeting that is dealing with homelessness emergency accommodation. We are going to have a look at this. Member for Everton, you were clarifying something?

**Mr MANDER:** Yes. In those minutes the department of housing have given their report and said—

... Brisbane team putting them in Crystalbrook ... They're rejecting properties—

This is the people who have been offered accommodation—

... as the hotels are so nice! No procedures to deal with that situation.

That is the context of the question that I asked.

**CHAIR:** Okay. Minister, can you clarify?

**Mr MANDER:** No—

**CHAIR:** No, you got the chance to clarify. The minister is clarifying that.

**Mr MANDER:** Therefore, it is the government's time if the minister is responding because the question is to the director-general.

**CHAIR:** I am not really sure where this is going. I am happy to take that briefly off our time. Minister, I am not sure how you can clarify this.

**Ms SCANLON:** I am unclear what point the member for Everton is trying to make. Would he rather us not provide homeless Queenslanders with support?

**Mr MANDER:** Somebody is—

**CHAIR:** Member!

**Mr MANDER:** not leaving taxpayer funded accommodation—

**CHAIR:** Member!

**Mr MANDER:** because it is too luxurious.

**CHAIR:** Member, do not interject.

**Mr MANDER:** What—

**CHAIR:** Member! Three times! Minister, please finish your answer.

**Ms SCANLON:** There are processes for us to work with people who are sleeping rough who are in emergency accommodation to find them longer-term housing. I will hand over to the director-general or the deputy director-general to talk through the processes that we employ to assist very vulnerable people who have been sleeping rough in some circumstances to find more permanent housing. I think it is entirely appropriate though that government offers people help when they need it.

**Mr McDONALD:** No-one is arguing that.

**Ms SCANLON:** These are families who need help.

**Mr MANDER:** That is not the argument.

**CHAIR:** Member, cease interjecting. Minister, please continue.

**Ms SCANLON:** Chair, I am happy to hand over to the director-general or the deputy director-general to talk through the process.

**Mr Cridland:** Thanks, Minister. I thank the member for the question. Obviously, this has just been put before us. I will need an opportunity to verify and interrogate what has been presented and check the veracity and check who is organising what. We will try to endeavour to do that before the end of the session if we can.

**Mr MANDER:** On that further information that would be required while we are on that theme, if you do not mind, Chair—

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr MANDER:** Could you clarify whether that person or that household is still staying in the Crystalbrook? This is a month old now.

**Mr Cridland:** No, I will not share details regarding a particular individual.

**Mr MANDER:** I do not need to know who they are. It is the principle that somebody has rejected long-term accommodation because they are staying in a five-star hotel.

**CHAIR:** Member, we have no idea of the circumstances for that one there.

**Mr MANDER:** That is what I am asking for.

**CHAIR:** You are not going to know the circumstances of these people's situation. We will get back to you further on this particular one. We are going to go to government questions.

**Mr BROWN:** Can the minister update the committee on how the Miles government is supporting home ownership through our Help to Buy shared equity scheme, and is she aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Capalaba for the question. Our ambitious Homes for Queenslanders plan works to address challenges across the whole housing system. That includes a pillar focused on helping first home owners into the market. We are leaving no stone unturned to make sure that home ownership is within reach for all young Queenslanders. Unfortunately, that is clearly not a priority for all members of parliament.

To support more people to buy their own home, earlier this year Queensland became the first state to pass enabling legislation for the Commonwealth government's Help to Buy scheme. It is a program that will make it easier for more than 8,000 Queenslanders to buy a home. It is a shared equity program to help low- to middle-income earners to purchase new or existing homes by accessing an equity contribution from the Australian government. Prospective home owners will require a minimum two per cent deposit and will receive an equity contribution of up to 40 per cent of the purchase price for a new home and up to 30 per cent for an existing home. Unfortunately, the LNP and Greens in Canberra are currently standing in the way of thousands of Queenslanders owning their own home. The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Everton are too scared of their federal colleagues to pick up the phone and get it across the line.

When you look at what their mates have been saying, it is pretty clear that they do not have the fortitude to stand up to them. From the member for Bowman, we heard: 'This housing scheme, unfortunately, will not offer homeownership but rather home co-ownership with the government ... We've got serious concerns about the shared-equity model... Shared-equity schemes are not the solution to help Australians into their own homes.' From the member for Herbert, we heard: 'This bill should be scrapped, and the Albanese Labor government needs to set up policies that get out of your way, not in your way'—this is describing a program that would help thousands of Queenslanders.

The member for Whitsunday said—

I don't know anyone who wants to skip hand in hand with the Australian government down the path to the first front door that they have ever owned.

...

A coalition government does not want a stake in your family home.

The Leader of the Opposition's hand-picked candidate for Oodgeroo called the Help to Buy scheme 'really, really dangerous'. That is who this lot want on the front bench.

Member for Capalaba, in stark contrast, our government will back the 8,000 Queenslanders who I know want to participate in this scheme. Unfortunately, what is evident is that the LNP do not support initiatives that would help low- to middle-income Queenslanders.

**CHAIR:** Minister, can you update us on how Queensland is stepping up with the community housing sector to buy NRAS properties, and are there any alternatives?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Bancroft for the question. As part of the Homes for Queenslanders plan, the Miles government is stepping up for Queenslanders where the LNP stepped out. In 2014, when the opposition leader was a minister and the member for Everton was housing minister, the federal LNP government made a decision to end the National Rental Affordability Scheme.

**Mr HART:** It was a 10-year program. It ended by itself.

**CHAIR:** Order, members!

**Mr HART:** It ended by itself.

**CHAIR:** Members, cease interjecting.

**Ms SCANLON:** I take the interjection from the member for Burleigh. It did not end by itself. It was a deliberate decision by the then LNP government—

**Mr MANDER:** It was a 10-year plan!

**CHAIR:** Thank you, members. Please cease the interjections.

**Ms SCANLON:**—who decided to not continue subsidising those homes as affordable.

**Mr MANDER:** Well, call Albo.

**Ms SCANLON:** I take the member's interjection. I have called on my federal government colleagues. You are the only people who have not.

**Mr MANDER:** What have they done?

**CHAIR:** Members, your interjections are becoming a little bit vigorous.

**Ms SCANLON:** Chair, that put thousands of Queensland homes on the trajectory to be lost from the pool of affordable homes. It was a terrible and short-sighted decision, typical of LNP governments. With Queenslanders left in the lurch—

**Mr HART:** You just can't tell the truth.

**Ms SCANLON:** It is factual information, member for Burleigh. I know that you might not like hearing it, but it is factual information. Queenslanders were left in the lurch thanks to these actions, but we have stepped in to keep as many of these homes as we can as social or affordable housing, in partnership with community housing providers like the National Affordable Housing Consortium and Coast2Bay. Importantly, this intervention also directly supports community housing providers to help grow their asset base, increasing their financial sustainability and genuinely unleashing their potential. It is a real intervention—unlike the slogans that we hear from those opposite, who still cannot elaborate on what they mean when they say the same thing.

I am proud to update the committee to let them know that the Miles government has supported a number of community housing providers to acquire 500 properties, from Townsville to Logan, that would have otherwise been lost. That includes 50 more homes, I can announce for the first time today, that have been purchased through our Housing Investment Fund. Together with the National Affordable Housing Consortium, the Miles government has locked in a mix of houses, townhouses, units and duplexes in the Darling Downs, Wide Bay-Burnett, Whitsunday and South-East Queensland regions to own and operate as long-term social housing. While we continue to build more social homes, we are not afraid to work with community housing providers to purchase properties like this through our Housing Investment Fund.

The member for Everton and recently the member for Kawana have made it clear they would rather leave these empty retirement villages, hotels, motels and NRAS properties than provide those at subsidised rates for vulnerable Queenslanders. We make no apologies for doing these things. In fact, I am surprised to hear comments from the member for Kawana about this because it is a fairly stunning backflip, given he was only asking me to purchase these properties in his own electorate not that long ago. That is exactly what we have done, but clearly—clearly—he has not been able to get the support from his colleagues to do the same.

**Mr SMITH:** Could the minister please outline what the Miles government is doing to work towards ending homelessness, especially in my electorate of Bundaberg, and is she aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Bundaberg for the question. I know how passionate he is when it comes to delivering more homes for the Bundaberg region and also helping some really vulnerable people in his community, and I want to acknowledge him and his electorate office for the work they have been doing.

The Miles government is delivering a record investment in our Homes for Queenslanders plan to build more homes faster, to boost our social housing big build and to work towards ending homelessness. That includes initiatives like our 20 per cent uplift of funding for specialist homelessness services. In Bundaberg, that means more funding for groups like Regional Housing Ltd, Vinnies and the Salvos, who provide much needed accommodation and support to people who are sleeping rough.

I have had the opportunity to get out on the ground with the member for Bundaberg, alongside some of our team from the Housing Service Centre and services, and I cannot thank those people enough for the work they do. They will soon be joined by our expanded critical response team who, after their success in Brisbane, are bringing their expertise and support to Bundaberg as well as many other parts of the state.

We are also supporting renters to find, keep and get a rental, including rolling out more RentConnect staff in Bundaberg so we can give that practical support to renters. Families like that of Amy Thompson, who secured a four-bedroom home with the help of RentConnect officers after experiencing two periods of homelessness and a stint in emergency housing, I know are incredibly grateful for that additional support. Caring for their five children while partner Floyd works in security, she said, 'Before we were living day to day, whereas now we can see the future.'

Chair, working towards ending homelessness also means boosting our social housing big build by rolling out more modular homes in areas like Bundaberg. As part of our budget announcement of more modular homes, we have already put out to tender another 30-plus modular homes for that region. This, however, is all at risk under the LNP, who have admitted that they do not support modular homes. In fact, it was the member for Burnett who suggested that building modular homes for Bundaberg was 'too much'. I would like him to tell that to the families who have moved into the modular homes we have completed in Walkerville, to the families who will be making the most of the next 30-plus modular homes we are building for that region, and to the Queensland businesses and QBuild staff who are in factories across the state right now building modular homes for people who need them. However, I would not



expect much from the member for Burnett, who, despite working for QBuild, was part of a government that sacked 1,600 QBuild workers and sent social housing backwards by 428 homes. We will continue to invest for the people of Bundaberg because that is what they deserve.

**Mr BROWN:** Can the minister update the committee on how the Miles government is focused on growing both community and public housing, and is she aware of any risky alternatives?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Capalaba for the question. Our Homes for Queenslanders plan sets out ambitious targets of delivering one million new homes, and we are pulling every lever possible to deliver them faster. That includes working in partnership with community housing providers across the state, a core tenet of our housing plan. In fact, there has never been more money available to the community housing sector than under our Labor government.

We have committed to establishing a single, modernised housing master agreement to reduce red tape and give industry certainty. We will also introduce 20-year management leases on new social housing and existing leases offered by government, where appropriate, to help the sector invest and grow, and we are stepping in to buy National Rental Affordability Scheme homes with the community housing sector—something that we have to do because the former LNP government cut that program.

Right now, there are 558 homes under construction in partnership with community housing providers and another 1,393 contracted and in the pipeline. Partnering with community housing providers in this way has been a unique proposal brought forward, supporting social and affordable housing needs that will assist people in Queensland. With our support, community housing providers have been able to grow to manage almost now 17,000 social and affordable homes across the state. We know that a strong and healthy community housing sector is good for all of Queensland, but we are focused on growing both community and public housing. Just as we are delivering more publicly owned energy assets, Queensland tradies are on the tools right now out on public homes right across this state.

Over the last 10 years, Queensland has been the only state in the country to have increased both public and community housing. It is something you can only trust Labor governments to deliver. While we are proud of public ownership, we hear nothing but crickets from the opposition. You will not hear the LNP say the words 'public housing', because they do not believe in it. While we have taken on multinational mining companies to give money back to Queensland households and to deliver more social homes, the Leader of the Opposition and the LNP have voted to sell publicly owned assets or suggested that is something they do not support. Queenslanders have a very serious question to ask of the opposition: does this mean they will axe public housing just like they tried to do last time, and rather than build public homes they will hand billions back to mining companies and make cuts to rebates, health, education and housing? It is clear that the opposition cannot be trusted in this space. It is only the Miles Labor government that can be trusted to deliver both community and public housing.

**CHAIR:** Minister, can you update the committee on how the Miles government is delivering on the Homes for Queenslanders plan for the Moreton Bay region?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I know he has also been a passionate advocate for his community. Under our Homes for Queenslanders plan the Miles government is establishing critical response teams in the number of locations I mentioned in the member for Bundaberg's electorate but we will also be rolling out those teams in the Moreton Bay region, as well. This follows the success of the team that is already operating in the Brisbane region. I give those teams a shout-out because they do extraordinary work, as do the specialist homelessness services we have on the ground. The CRT in Brisbane has already supported more than 750 people into more secure accommodation in partnership with our government funded specialist homelessness services.

My department's commitment to supporting people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Moreton Bay is not new. Over the last 12 months the department has conducted more than 250 days of outreach at homelessness hotspots across Moreton Bay. They have engaged with over 270 people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness to offer a range of supports, including temporary and long-term accommodation. The team have also been working with people who are sleeping rough at Mckillop Park at Rothwell. In addition, the department's purchase of a former retirement village at Rothwell is providing 18 temporary homes for locals. I acknowledge the member for Bancroft and the Premier. When I visited that former aged-care facility I met two men who were there, both of whom had had contact with your electorate office and the Premier's electorate office. That was part of the reason they were able to get the support that they needed. I give a shout-out to all of the electorate officers across the work who do important work to make sure vulnerable people get the support and connection they need to obtain appropriate housing.

This government recognises the importance of helping young people who are facing homelessness, which is why Moreton Bay will become home to one of the eight new youth foyers across the state. This is a key commitment under our Homes for Queenslanders plan which sets a target to deliver 53,500 social homes by 2046.

I am pleased that we have social housing underway. We have recently delivered a number of projects in the Moreton Bay region. This includes: 24 new social homes that are currently under construction in Caboolture; the recent completion of a 10-home complex and 20-home complex in Caboolture as well; and an 18-unit complex for older Queenslanders in Redcliffe. We are looking forward to more housing in the growing Moreton Bay region, as it is among the top six local government areas for Ministerial Infrastructure Designation activity in the past financial year. Waraba, the new PDA declared today, in particular will be home to tens of thousands of Queenslanders into the future, which is really important. This government will always deliver for Moreton Bay. I look forward to continuing to update the House on the progress we have made in that region.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, thank you for acknowledging the EO staff in Bundaberg. They will very much appreciate that. Could you please update the committee on how the Miles government is supporting more homes for First Nations communities, and are you aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Bundaberg for the question. All First Nations Queenslanders should have a safe and secure home that meets their housing and cultural needs and that provides the foundation for their families and communities to thrive. I am proud of the work this government is doing to support improved housing outcomes for people who are living in First Nations communities in Queensland as part of our commitment to closing the gap.

As part of our Homes for Queenslanders plan we have set a target of 53,500 social homes by 2046. This includes 1,200 social homes for First Nations families. Housing supply that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and families is increasing across the state. Since 2015-16 we have delivered: 654 new homes; 83 extensions to social homes or standalone studios on social housing properties; and 382 residential allotments in First Nations communities. Up to 203 new houses, 52 extensions to current dwellings and 179 new land lots for further social housing are also planned to be delivered through the \$40 million and \$105 million remote capital programs and other state funding programs. But it is not just housing supply that we are focused on—this government is delivering real change in partnership with First Nations peoples and the sector right across the housing system. In April this year, I had the opportunity to launch the Our Place Roadmap and the Our Place Action Plan which sets out 27 actions across five priority outcome areas to improve housing for First Nations peoples. Our Place is backed in by an investment of an additional \$61 million and was developed in genuine consultation with First Nations communities and in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland. We are also delivering \$10 million through our Homes for Queenslanders plan to increase home ownership outcomes for First Nations Queenslanders.

Another focus of our government is to support the 17 local governments in First Nations communities to develop place-based community-led local housing plans to identify and respond to local housing challenges and priorities. I am proud to say five councils including Cherbourg, Kowanyama Mapoon, Napranum and the Northern Peninsula Area have all formally endorsed their local housing plans which is great news for those local communities. My department is continuing to work with the 12 councils to finalise their plans. Of course, we could do much more if the former LNP federal government had not brutally cut funding to remote housing by ending the national partnership agreement around remote Indigenous housing. It will go down in history as one of the worst decisions by a government. Closing the gap indicators that were previously heading in the right direction are now going the wrong way as a result of this cut. Our Miles government will always advocate for more federal funding.

**Mr Hart** interjected.

**Ms SCANLON:** I can hear the member for Burleigh's interjection and I suggest that he listen to the remainder of this contribution because unlike those members opposite, I will always—

**Mr HART:** They can't tell the truth.

**CHAIR:** Order, member! That was disorderly.

**Ms SCANLON:** It is the truth, and I will always call on what is right for this state. I was proud to stand alongside mayors from First Nations communities recently as they made their pitch to the current federal government in Canberra. It is so important to all Queenslanders, including people who live in regional, remote and discrete communities, to have access to a range of housing and services to meet those needs. We will always stand up for those communities because that is what good Queensland Labor governments do.

**CHAIR:** I will go back to opposition members for more questions.

**Mr MANDER:** A question to the director-general, to finish off the last section. To give context, the reason I ask questions about this potentially luxurious combination is that the more money that is spent on that, the less money is spent on other people who might also be able to be housed. I assume you will have to take this question on notice. Could you please provide a list of the five-star hotels that the department has used or uses for emergency accommodation that are either engaged directly through the department or a provider that the department funds for the last financial year?

**CHAIR:** That is an interesting one.

**Mr MANDER:** Many of my questions are interesting.

**CHAIR:** I am not sure why working class people do not deserve this.

**Mr MANDER:** I gave the context. I do not expect the director-general to have that information at hand. I have asked for that question to be taken on notice. I want to know whether it will be taken on notice, please.

**CHAIR:** We will wait and get some information to you; is that correct?

**Mr Cridland:** Thank you, Chair. I thank the member for the question. I am struggling with how we would identify what five-star is because some self-rate at five-star. I do not know about the system for it, plus I would be reluctant to identify the names of hotels and locations of where people are, to be honest.

**Ms SCANLON:** I would add that we have people who are fleeing domestic and family violence in some of these places, so I think for safety reasons we need to be really careful—

**Mr MANDER:** Just the number is fine; I do not need to know names.

**CHAIR:** Wait, let's get back to the question. Are we talking about a self-imposed five-star rating? Is this how they are advertised, or is there a nationally recognised standard?

**Mr MANDER:** I will take NRMA.

**Mr SMITH:** I do a five-star pasta, but it is not officially recognised.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Bundaberg. I am sure there will be some information to get back to you later on. Do you have a further question, member for Everton?

**Mr MANDER:** I do. Would the director-general—I imagine you do not have this information at hand—provide the committee with the cost associated with any damage or excess cleaning costs of people leaving emergency hotel accommodation?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. I am advised that in 2023-24 \$30,614 was expended on cleaning and repair costs of hotel and motel accommodation brokered by our housing service centres.

**Mr MANDER:** Does that include the not-for-profit housing providers as well or is it just the department?

**Mr Cridland:** Just the department, yes.

**Mr MANDER:** Are the not-for-profits responsible for meeting those costs?

**Mr Cridland:** I would have to check the arrangement that is in place with the SHSs around any costs.

**Mr MANDER:** Could we ask for that—

**CHAIR:** I am sure someone is getting a record of the particular requests.

**Mr MANDER:** On that same theme, Director-General, last year when we were speaking about the damage to social housing properties caused by tenants you said there were a number of 'subsets'. Could you please advise what the subsets are of the unplanned responsive maintenance activities?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. What I can say to you is that the maintenance activities in 2023-24 totalled 307,721 work orders to a total of value of \$386.7 million at an average cost of \$1,257 per work order.

**Mr MANDER:** Last year we had a discussion about what that actually was. Is that the total maintenance figure, or is that the figure that is associated with unplanned responsive maintenance activities?

**Mr Cridland:** It is the total maintenance figure.

**Mr MANDER:** You mentioned last year there were subsets. I am interested to know what those subsets are. I am interested to know when there was wilful damage done to properties.

**Mr Cridland:** Okay. In that case, Chair, with your permission, I can answer that for the member. Unfair wear and tear is generally defined in our system as things like holes in walls, broken doors or windows, stains, pet damage, broken fixtures et cetera or replacement of keys and locks. As at 30 June 2024, the expenditure on what we classify as unfair wear and tear was \$20.96 million, or about five per cent of the overall maintenance budget.

**Mr MANDER:** I am not sure if you have this figure to hand. Could you indicate the cost of damages for the properties with the highest bills for damage? What would be the highest damage bill for one property?

**Mr Cridland:** No, I do not have that information to hand.

**Mr MANDER:** Could you take that on notice, Chair?

**CHAIR:** It is up to the minister whether or not she takes it on notice. The information may or may not exist.

**Ms SCANLON:** I am happy to come back at the end of the session if we have that information.

**Mr MANDER:** I will continue on that theme, Director-General. With regard to clandestine drug labs, how many have been identified in the past financial year in social housing properties and what was the cost to remediate those?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. In 2023-24 QPS advised there were three clandestine drug labs operating in department owned and managed social homes. The remediation cost in total for all three was \$47,000.

**Mr MANDER:** Is that included in the \$29.6 million?

**Mr Cridland:** Yes—sorry, no it is not. It is included in the broader maintenance figure, as I understand.

**Mr MANDER:** Is there another category that that belongs to, or is that a separate category in itself?

**Mr Cridland:** I will just clarify that for you. I will just check if it is in that overall unfair wear and tear so I do not mislead you.

**Mr MANDER:** What about properties where there has not been a drug lab but illicit drug use has taken place? There is strong evidence to suggest that it can be extremely harmful to an individual moving into a property that has been contaminated in this way. I am talking about meth residue contamination. How many properties have been identified that fall under that category and what did that cost in the last financial year?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. As at 30 June 2024 there were 154 social homes where we had to undertake drug remediation works. It is important to note when I give you the costs, though, that those figures encapsulate not only the remediation works but also any other maintenance activities, like yard upkeep or repairs. It was \$2.9 million for the 154 homes. All of those properties were remediated to conform with the remediation guidelines from the Australian Crime Commission to make them safe to let.

**Mr MANDER:** That was \$2.9 million?

**Mr Cridland:** Yes.

**Mr MANDER:** I will ask the same question I asked for the previous one. Is that \$2.9 million included as part of the \$29.6 million?

**Mr Cridland:** We will come back to you on that.

**Mr MANDER:** They are important questions, Chair. I want to make sure there are no other categories of money that are not being identified, which was the issue we had last year with regard to definitions. Director-General, what are the consequences for somebody who deliberately and wilfully damages social housing property?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. The department has a strong tenancy management policy in place to ensure tenants meet their obligations regarding behaviour, paying rent, being a good neighbour and maintaining the property. Much like private housing tenants, public housing tenants are responsible for the behaviour of their household members, visitors, guests or anyone who happens to be on the property. When the department becomes aware of poor behaviour or disruptive

behaviour, the department, as the state's largest landlord, takes action. Actions can include issuing warnings to tenants about their behaviour, issuing tenancy breaches where required and actively referring tenants to appropriate government and community support services so that they reduce the impact on other tenants. However, when all available avenues have been exhausted and as a last resort, the department, like other responsible landlords, uses the provisions of the tenancy legislation and provides the tenant natural justice through a QCAT process which may result in ending the tenancy through eviction.

**Mr MANDER:** How many people were evicted from social housing this past financial year?

**Mr Cridland:** Fifty-seven tenants.

**Mr MANDER:** If somebody has wilfully damaged a property, are they asked to pay for that damage, to pay for the repairs?

**Mr Cridland:** Yes, in many cases we issue a debt notice to those tenants to repay moneys for the damage.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, changing to another subject, does the department have a policy for the longest period of time they will hold a house vacant for an individual who is incarcerated?

**CHAIR:** I think this was the subject of one of the questions on notice. I think it was question 18 in the questions on notice.

**Mr MANDER:** Correct.

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. The department, like any other landlord, understands that tenants may be, at times, temporarily absent from their home in situations such as visiting family or for health or cultural reasons and also for being incarcerated. Public housing tenants have the right to be absent from the home in the same way as private market tenants. During an approved absence tenants must comply with the terms and conditions of their state tenancy agreement including paying rent and ensuring the property is maintained. If the tenant does not comply with their responsibilities or are absent from the home for more than the allowed period, the department may take action to end their tenancy. In terms of if a tenant is absent from the home due to being incarcerated, the department regularly engages with the tenant and Queensland Corrective Services to identify the tenant's needs, including housing stability for when they exit the correctional facility, and to support their reintegration into the community.

The fair absence from your home policy allows tenants to be away from their home without approval for up to eight weeks and absences over eight weeks and up to five months within a 12-month period require prior approval. I would also say the department accepts its role in establishing better criminal justice systems outcomes and the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute have both noted the association between housing stability and reduced recidivism where former prisoners in stable housing are much less likely to reoffend and has significant benefits for police incidences, time in custody, justice system costs and health system costs.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, from that answer my understanding is that there is no maximum period that is allowed in the policy?

**Mr Cridland:** As I said, the policy allows up to eight weeks without approval and over eight weeks and up to five months requires approval, so up to five months.

**Mr MANDER:** Okay. Going back to that question on notice, I think it was 33 people who were in this category. What is the longest period of incarceration out of those 33?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. Of the 33 as at today, 12 have been released and have returned to their homes; 16 have a confirmed release date, with the latest release date being November; and five are awaiting confirmation of release date, and we are working with corrections on that.

**Mr MANDER:** Further, Director-General, on that same issue, what is the rent that they pay when they are incarcerated?

**Mr Cridland:** The rent is determined on an individual case-by-case basis. Our expectation is that they pay according to our policy which is 25 per cent of gross household income, but it is worked out on an individual basis.

**CHAIR:** Further questions, member for Everton? You have a couple of minutes left.

**Mr MANDER:** Is there a minimum rate that is paid?

**Mr Cridland:** Yes, member. You can apply and be approved to pay a minimum rent condition if you are unable to pay.

**Mr MANDER:** And what is that rate?

**Mr Cridland:** The rate is approximately \$19 per week.

**Mr MANDER:** So \$19 a week. Director-General, just going back to the previous question about the number of people who were at the Pine Rivers Showgrounds, do you know how many people there are homeless?

**Mr Cridland:** My recollection—I will check—is it was eight at Pine Rivers.

**Mr MANDER:** Eight?

**Mr Cridland:** Yes, I believe so. I am just checking for you, member.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, how do you reconcile at least eight people at Pine Rivers do not have a house but there are 33 houses that are or were vacant that are being left vacant by people who are jailed?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. What I would say is what I have said previously—that is, anyone experiencing homelessness is offered accommodation. There are cases where people refuse accommodation. I am not going to get into talking about individual cases for privacy reasons, but anyone experiencing homelessness who is ready to accept we offer accommodation to. In relation to you connecting this to another policy, I just remind the member that when you asked this question on notice I went back to what the policy was under the LNP. Under the procedure and temporary absences policy under the LNP, in fact there was the opportunity for tenants to seek approval for temporary absences of three to six months for the imprisonment of a tenant. The policy of the LNP was almost identical to the policy that exists now, so I am not sure what point you are trying to make.

**Mr MANDER:** The major difference is that there are thousands of people sleeping out in the streets and in parks.

**CHAIR:** Member, that is not a question. It is not a chance—

**Mr MANDER:** That is the major difference.

**CHAIR:** Member, stop.

**Mr MANDER:** I was asked.

**Ms SCANLON:** And—

**CHAIR:** Stop. Everyone, stop. Thank you. No backwards and forwards. Where were we? Minister, you are answering the question.

**Ms SCANLON:** Thanks, Chair. I would love to address the point that the member just made, because the fundamental difference is that we are delivering more homes and the member for Everton sent social housing backwards. That is the difference between the time that the member for Everton was the housing minister.

**Mr MANDER:** We did not have 5,900 people added to the social housing waiting list—

**Ms SCANLON:** Can you imagine how—

**Mr MANDER:**—in nine months.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, cease your interjections.

**Ms SCANLON:** If I can make a remark, Chair?

**Mr MANDER:** Imagine if we planned better.

**CHAIR:** Member, cease your interjections. The minister is replying.

**Ms SCANLON:** Can you imagine how much worse it would be if the member for Everton had continued down that destructive path of sending social housing backwards?

**Mr MANDER:** Imagine the Logan Renewal Initiative actually took place and that was replicated across the state.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, I keep telling you to cease your interjections. I do not want to give you a warning, but that may come. Minister, did you want to continue your answer?

**Ms SCANLON:** I think I have answered the member's question. As I said, we offer accommodation to anyone experiencing homelessness who is willing to accept. We are investing in social and affordable housing. I just find the line of questioning from the member for Everton pretty astounding. He just went down a line of questioning inferring that he does not want us to broker accommodation in certain areas for a certain cost and would rather those people evidently stay on the street but then has the audacity to make a point around people experiencing homelessness.

**Mr MANDER:** Point of order: I take personal offence at that and I ask that it be withdrawn.

**CHAIR:** You take personal offence.

**Ms SCANLON:** I withdraw.

**CHAIR:** We will go to some questions from government members.

**Mr SMITH:** During all of that I reminded myself that I actually need to pay my rent, which brings me to this question.

**CHAIR:** I will remind you at dinnertime.

**Mr SMITH:** Thank you; that would be good. Minister, could you please update the committee on how the Miles government is supporting young renters in particular through its Homes for Queenslanders plan, and are you aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Bundaberg for the question and I know he is a big advocate for renters in the Queensland parliament. Our Homes for Queenslanders plan is delivering a \$160 million rent relief package to help tackle the cost of living. One-third of Queenslanders rent and the portion of young people renting is even higher. That is why the Miles government has delivered a comprehensive renters relief package to help young Queenslanders find, get and keep a secure rental. We have built a team of frontline staff to provide practical support and this year we have provided 78,000 Queenslanders with private market assistance including bond loans, rental grants, RentConnect services and rental security subsidy payments. We are also introducing a new bridging bond loan product while we are working through the delivery of a permanent portable bond scheme. We also know that young people need some extra support, so we are also providing an additional investment of \$18.1 million over two years for an enhanced and expanded housing and homelessness service specifically for young people. A youth subsidy for registered community housing providers will support more young people who are eligible for social housing to find a place to call home.

On top of the \$160 million to help renters with tackling the cost of living, we are also making sure that tenants really know their rights with another \$44 million towards the Queensland Statewide Tenant Advice and Referral Service, and I want to acknowledge the great work that that team do. I have been to their base and listened to a number of the staff there who answer phone calls and they just do great work. QSTARS provides renters with a free and independent advice and referral service. It is a critical service which was sensationally cut completely when the member for Everton was the housing minister. Labor brought it back because we support the work that they do—unlike the LNP, which not only cut funding to tenancy support services; they actually took the extraordinary step of rejecting federal government funding. They could have made the decision not to invest themselves but even said no to Canberra paying for this really important service. That is the level of disdain they had for renters.

Since 2015 QSTARS has been providing information to tenants on their rights and responsibilities, support to resolve tenancy issues and assistance when talking to landlords or property managers. Around 120,000 Queensland households are assisted through QSTARS each and every year which I think reiterates how important this service is. It complements our private rental market supports which are helping to keep a roof over the heads of Queenslanders and families. While those opposite tore up protections for renters and axed that tenancy support, our Labor government will never turn our back on renters and these important services.

**Mr BROWN:** Can the minister update the committee on how Queensland is leveraging off the federal government's Housing Australia Future Fund, and is she aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Capalaba for the question. I know he is a big advocate for his community and for Queensland getting our fair share from Canberra. Through our Homes for Queenslanders plan, we have obviously committed an ambitious target of 53,500 more social homes. To do that, it means continuing to advocate to the federal government to make sure Queensland gets our fair share of funding. The federal government have already shown they are leaps and bounds ahead of the former federal government. Recently we secured \$398 million in funding from the federal government through the Social Housing Accelerator program which will help deliver around 600 more social homes and we have submitted a 'Team Queensland' bid to access the first tranche of the Housing Australia Future Fund.

This bid of several projects would position Queensland to utilise well-located state controlled land for social and affordable housing projects. Our target is an ambitious one but it is one that Queensland cannot do alone. It needs federal politicians to back more funding for our state, which is why I was so confused to see that, after months of claiming our Homes for Queenslanders plan is too much, the LNP has decided to match our target, because how can those opposite—

**Mr MANDER:** I thought we were not building any.

**Ms SCANLON:** Well, you did not.

**Mr MANDER:** What has happened?

**CHAIR:** Order, members. Let us continue.

**Ms SCANLON:** The question I have, Chair, is: how can those opposite achieve our target? If they had their way, there would be no Housing Australia Future Fund. I do not know how you deliver a target with no money from the federal government. I remind the committee that last year Peter Dutton and the LNP voted against a fund that will deliver up to 30,000 social and affordable homes. The LNP put a fund nearly identical to our Housing Investment Fund in the deep freeze, threatening to leave Queensland without that critical funding. Queenslanders have already felt the impacts of what happened when the federal government walked away from providing its fair share of investment in housing for many years, just like they did when the federal LNP government stepped away from the National Rental Affordability Scheme, leaving affordable housing tenants in the lurch, or when it washed its hands of critical funding for remote Indigenous communities.

**Mr HART:** Do you get tired of trying to blame everybody else?

**Ms SCANLON:** I can imagine the member for Burleigh gets tired of me reminding him of his track record. I will remind Queenslanders every day of the week what your record was, because there is a very real risk that you will do exactly the same thing if given the chance. How can Queenslanders trust the opposition leader, the LNP and their targets when they will not advocate for our fair share and outline how they will aim to get there? The Miles government will always back Queenslanders and stand up for our state, and the opposition leader and the LNP have not, do not and never will stand up for Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Minister, can you update the committee on Queensland's nation-leading tenancy satisfaction for social housing, and are you aware of any risky alternatives?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Bancroft for the question. Queensland has consistently had the most satisfied social housing tenants in the country. According to the latest biennial National Social Housing Survey, around four in five tenants—79.8 per cent—who were surveyed in Queensland indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied. This compares to the national average of 68.9 per cent. The result marks the fifth consecutive survey in which Queensland had the most satisfied social housing tenants in Australia.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Order! Thank you, members. Minister?

**Ms SCANLON:** Clearly, the LNP are not proud of our track record and want social housing tenants to not be satisfied, which is a bizarre position to have. Both my parents grew up in social housing. My dad went on to work in the Queensland Police Service. My mum went on to work in social services. Investments in social housing change families' lives, and that is why good Labor governments will continue to invest in this space. I think some of the interjections and the comments from the LNP suggest exactly what they will do: kick people out and disrespect social housing tenants, and that is not what they deserve. I am pleased to say that Queensland tenants also reported the most benefits of living in social housing, with 83.3 per cent of tenants surveyed reporting that living in social housing had economic, health and social benefits.

These results are very similar to those in the Report on Government Services. It found that Queensland public housing tenants were the most satisfied in Australia. Specifically, 79.5 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied in 2022, which is well above the national average of 66.7 per cent. These results reflect not only the significant investment we have made into delivering high-quality social housing for Queenslanders in need; they also reflect the hard work of our passionate and dedicated frontline housing staff. Frontline staff in my department and the non-government sector really do go above and beyond to work proactively with our tenants to ensure that their housing needs are met and that they feel safe, secure, happy and healthy in their homes.

Supporting and looking after tenants will always be a priority for me and this government. It is what good Labor governments do. However, we know that the wellbeing of residents, for some committee members, is clearly not a priority, which is really disappointing. When the member for Everton was the housing minister, his priority was less about looking after social housing tenants, many of whom have complex mental health, health and disability needs, and more about turfing them out of housing. They tried to privatise tenancy management, undermining the great work of hardworking housing service centre staff. We know—



**Mr MANDER:** They are not-for-profits.

**CHAIR:** Keep going.

**Mr MANDER:** Is that your definition of privatisation?

**Ms SCANLON:** Evidently, from the interjections from the member for Everton, that is his plan again.

**Mr MANDER:** Community housing organisations, yes.

**CHAIR:** Members, cease interjecting.

**Ms SCANLON:** It is to outsource the work of our hardworking service centres—

**Mr MANDER:** No. They will still do their work. New houses will go into the community housing sector.

**CHAIR:** Member, cease interjecting. If I need to keep saying this then you will be warned.

**Ms SCANLON:** That is what we are already doing.

**Mr MANDER:** What are you criticising for?

**Ms SCANLON:** You are the one who is criticising, member for Everton.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Are we finished? Briefly, Minister, can you update the committee on how the government is working towards ending homelessness, including through the independent review into homelessness services?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. As the member will know, the underlying factors that lead to homelessness are complex issues. Domestic and family violence, mental health challenges, addiction and economic factors are often factors behind why someone may be experiencing homelessness. The complexity of the issues affecting the community has increased and this is happening globally, not just in Queensland. We know that we have to change the way we respond to meet these challenges and, importantly, we have to listen to the experts and, particularly, those who have a lived experience.

When I first became the housing minister I travelled across Queensland and listened to those on the front line, from peak bodies to other community organisations, who asked for a review of Queensland's homelessness response. The Miles Labor government has listened. We commissioned an independent review to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the current system, identifying gaps and proposing actionable solutions to prevent and reduce homelessness across Queensland's diverse communities.

To lead the review we needed someone who understands the landscape and who is trusted by all participants. Rachel Hunter is an experienced senior public servant who has had a long and distinguished career. She agreed to lead the review pro bono. She and her project team of technical specialists have already produced an interim report that, Chair, I am more than happy to release to the committee today and upload onto the website for Queenslanders to see. The report is backed up by independent research.

**Mr HART:** Have you already given it to the media?

**Ms SCANLON:** It would be made available to the committee and online so, of course, it would be made available to the media, member for Burleigh. I should mention that it was approved by cabinet only on Monday. We look forward to releasing the report and the work that is contained in it. It is backed up by independent research and extensive stakeholder engagement—1,290 people have been engaged. This is only the first phase of the work. In the next few months we will be working closely with Ms Hunter and her team to continue to implement the preliminary recommendations and explore opportunities for improvement and innovative solutions.

However, we will not stop there. We will continue to support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness by delivering on our Homes for Queenslanders plan. We have ramped up efforts with more funding for specialist homelessness services, more emergency accommodation and more help for the regions and for young people. We have provided a 20 per cent uplift of funding for those 90 specialist homelessness services and we are rolling out critical response teams because we know they have been so successful in Brisbane and we want to make sure we have more boots on the ground, responding.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for that important information. Are you happy for us to table that?

**Ms SCANLON:** Yes, Chair.

**CHAIR:** It is so tabled. We will go to the opposition for the next block of questions.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, the LNP is committed to funding specialist homelessness services with a 20 per cent funding uplift across the forward estimates. Why hasn't your government made the same commitment?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. It was the Labor government that announced that and the LNP that, after months suggesting our plan was too much, then said, 'Actually, we're going to do all the things that they said they were' but without any detail about how they are going to do them. We have obviously put our money where our mouth is with that uplift. It was always the intention to do that independent review and provide that 20 per cent uplift at the same time. That work is continuing. I have already made comments, and I know that you were in the room when I made the comment that it was always the government's intention to continue that 20 per cent uplift of funding. Of course, I hope that our government is elected in the next term to continue the efforts not only in that 20 per cent uplift of funding but also in all of the measures in our Homes for Queenslanders plan, which are at risk under an opposition.

**Mr MANDER:** Could the minister show me where that increased 20 per cent is in the forward estimates?

**Ms SCANLON:** As I just said, member, an allocation was made over a period for when the review was scheduled. I have subsequently said that we will continue that 20 per cent, if elected. That funding will be provided in due course, if we are elected to government.

**Mr MANDER:** So it is in the forward estimates?

**Ms SCANLON:** I just answered the question.

**Mr MANDER:** The allocation is in the forward estimates?

**Ms SCANLON:** I just answered the question, member for Everton.

**Mr MANDER:** It is not in the forward estimates?

**Ms SCANLON:** As I just said, the appropriation was made based on the review, but I have made a public commitment that, if elected, we will continue uplift in funding.

**Mr MANDER:** It is not in the forward estimates. You have made a commitment but it is not in the forward estimates.

**Ms SCANLON:** I have made a public commitment. I am sitting here in estimates telling you what that commitment is.

**Mr MANDER:** You have made a public commitment because of pressure from the LNP.

**Mr SMITH:** Point of order, Chair.

**Mr MANDER:** Because of our commitment, you felt you had to make changes.

**CHAIR:** We have a point of order.

**Mr MANDER:** We had a victory. We are happy about it. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The member will cease. Member for Bundaberg, you have a point of order?

**Mr SMITH:** Chair, the constant quarrelling and the fact that the member for Everton is not asking questions is taking up the valuable question time of all members. I know the members for Lockyer and Burleigh have not asked a question yet. I am sure they would like the member for Everton to stop.

**CHAIR:** Members, I remind you of a couple of standing orders—standing order 246 states that we do not quarrel across the chamber and standing order 247 states that members will speak through the chair. Thank you very much. Does the member have a further question?

**Mr MANDER:** Chair, I do. I would like to ask some questions of the chief executive of the RTA, please. CEO, the government's portable bond scheme was introduced in a recent bill to parliament. How far along is the work to create that portable bond scheme and what is the deadline that the RTA has been given for its completion?

**Ms Smith:** There has been no deadline given for the completion of that program. My understanding is the detail is still being worked out, but I will refer to the minister if she has any further detail from the department.

**Mr MANDER:** Let me just clarify that question: is that your task? Has that task been given to the RTA to work through or is that being done elsewhere?

**Ms Smith:** This has been a suggested opportunity to assist renters when moving from one property to another. It is a future endeavour to be explored, and the RTA will be responsible for initiating and enabling that service to work.

**Mr MANDER:** But you are not formulating the policy and how it will work?

**Ms Smith:** No. The RTA does not deal in policy matters. Policy matters are handled by the department. We, however, will regulate and actually build that functionality, as required.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, I ask the same question to you: where are we at with the portable bond scheme?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. The bill has passed parliament and allows for a portable bond scheme to be established. Work has commenced to design and develop the scheme in consultation with stakeholders. Whilst this detailed work is occurring, the department has developed a bridging bond loan product to assist renters to meet the cost of a new rental bond when changing tenancies. This will provide cost-of-living relief while the portable bond scheme is established, and the bridging bond loan will be live this month. The portable bond loan scheme, I believe, starts next year, but I will confirm that for you. There is a bridging bond loan in place in the meantime while we set the scheme up.

**Mr MANDER:** You will confirm when it will be implemented. May I ask a question about it? I am not sure if you have reached this stage yet. You may not know this detail but how can a landlord be assured that they will receive part of that bond to pay for any damages? I thought the idea of the scheme was to make it easier for renters to go from one property to the next. Of course, they would have to pay that bond straight away to another property. How does a landlord make a claim for that money, if it has already been transferred for another property? I am not sure if I have that right, but that is what I am thinking.

**Mr Cridland:** I understand. I will come back to you. There is still provision for landlords to claim reasonable amounts for any substantiated wear and tear, but the mechanics of how that transition will happen is being worked through along with the systems that have to be introduced to allow that.

**Mr MANDER:** I will stay with you, Director-General. It seems like it is your baby. The same legislation also talked about a framework for modifications to rental properties. Where is that framework at?

**Mr Cridland:** I might refer to the deputy director-general of policy, performance and First Nations to talk to that implementation.

**Ms McAllister:** I can advise that we have started consultation with the sector on the modifications framework. There was a workshop that occurred last week.

**Mr MANDER:** Have you been given any timeframe as to when that might be finalised?

**Ms McAllister:** We are working that through. The consultation is complex, so we are listening to what the stakeholders have to say and we need to consider that in full.

**Mr MANDER:** CEO, in July last year, changes came into effect where the government limited the frequency of when rents could be increased. At that time, it was not connected to the property and that caused mayhem with people taking advantage of that loophole. It has since been rectified. Was the RTA consulted when that first policy was being formulated?

**Ms Smith:** Yes, the RTA has been consulted on all the rental reforms over the last few years.

**Mr MANDER:** Did the RTA, at that time, voice any concerns about what the implications could have been with regard to the initial policy?

**Ms Smith:** I cannot recall on that particular matter but I am aware that, every time a policy position is put forward, the RTA puts forward the pros and cons of the proposed legislation, and we would have done that in this case too. I do not have the details on that to hand.

**Mr MANDER:** I have another question for the RTA CEO. At the Housing Summit, the Treasurer mentioned that 20,000 rental properties had left the private rental market. Has the RTA done any work on this—any modelling of the reasons behind that diminishing number of private rental properties?

**Ms Smith:** Firstly, I would state that the RTA does not have a database that contains every residential rental property in Queensland, and that is because, under the act, a bond, if it is not collected, does not have to be lodged with the RTA. Therefore, we do not have a complete listing of every rental property in Queensland. However, of the data that we do have, which is not complete for the reason I have just mentioned, we have done some analysis. Post COVID, there was a significant drop in bonds—

I think you mentioned 20,000. From the analysis that we have done, a lot of that was due to international students returning to their country of domicile and their bonds being returned. Properties may have also changed hands due to property owners facing financial difficulties. That number has, however, picked up and exceeded the original number. So the dip that we saw over two to three years has increased again and is now above that original dip number.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, when you introduced this legislation surrounding some of the issues I just mentioned—portable loans, modifications and so on—you had a sense of urgency about this and how important it would be. From the answers I am receiving from your officials, there does not seem to be any deadline or urgency. This obviously is not a priority for you or this would have all been implemented.

**CHAIR:** You have a hypothetical in there which includes a suggested idea or theory. Do you want to rephrase that with or without that hypothetical or that inference?

**Mr MANDER:** Is this a priority for the government when it would seem it is not going to be introduced before the election?

**Ms SCANLON:** Yes, it is a priority for the government, as are all of the measures in the Homes for Queenslanders plan. As we were very clear when we announced this plan, there would be a bridging loan while we developed the portable bond scheme. This is quite a complicated and technical piece of work that the department is working on. That is why we have that bridging loan component, along with many other rental reforms that have been brought in. I also want to comment briefly on the member's line of questioning around bonds held and, for the purpose of the committee, outline some data which shows that bonds held have actually increased year on year in the April-June 2024 quarter when compared to the April-June 2023 quarter.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, with the legislative changes you have made in this space—I think you have, or the government has, introduced two tranches over a period of time—what initiatives were introduced that actually made it easier for landlords?

**CHAIR:** I will give the minister a broad spectrum to answer this one perhaps.

**Ms SCANLON:** These are matters of legislative reform that went through the parliament—and they went through a committee process—that the member for Everton did not oppose. I take that to be that the LNP supports these reforms.

**Mr MANDER:** It is a direct question. It is a simple question. With regard to those legislative changes—

**CHAIR:** The minister is answering it.

**Mr MANDER:**—what have been the advantages to landlords?

**CHAIR:** Member, the minister is answering the question.

**Ms SCANLON:** I think there are a whole range of measures that provide confidence to landlords.

**Mr MANDER:** Fire away.

**Ms SCANLON:** There are a whole range of measures that provide confidence to landlords. That is why we have tried to make sure we have a fair and balanced rental system. I am not sure what point the member for Everton is trying to make. If the LNP are proposing new policy I would be very keen to hear it, because I have heard nothing to date.

**Mr MANDER:** I am just quoting your words about 'fair' and 'balanced'. 'Balanced' means that there are advantages for both sides. What advantages have been provided for landlords in any legislative changes you have made?

**Ms SCANLON:** For example, the modifications framework, I think, provides confidence to landlords about the process in which modifications can be made. I think an annual rent increase limit provides landlords with clarity about how they can manage their finances over a year-long period. There are a whole range of reforms that went through that different parties will have different views on. Again, the member for Everton did not oppose these reforms, so, again, I am not sure what point he is trying to make. A code of conduct—

**Mr HART:** Twenty thousand people have left the market.

**Ms SCANLON:** I take the member for Burleigh's interjection.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Keep going.

**Ms SCANLON:** If I can just respond to the member for Burleigh's interjection, Chair, I assume that he is trying to suggest—because I have heard the LNP say this—that that was a result of rental reforms. That has been demonstrated to be absolutely not found in any evidence. In fact, we have seen increased investor finance provided to Queensland. We are doing a whole range of things to encourage more housing supply, so I do not accept the point that the member for Burleigh is making. We think there does need to be a balanced renting system. That is why we have brought in a whole range of reforms and financial supports for renters. I would also say that there is a mortgage relief loan available to landlords.

**Mr MANDER:** Now that the minister has brought in legislation to fix up the mistake that was made initially with regard to the rental increases, did the government consider the extra burden that will be on renters now when they get a once-a-year rental increase that has not been able to take into account the increase in inflation rates and interest rates that landlords have had to take onboard but will have to pass some of that on to renters in their annual increase? Rather than progressive increases, there are now going to be, I would imagine, increases a lot larger than normal.

**Ms SCANLON:** This measure was about stabilising rents and providing people with confidence that they will not see a rent increase more than once a year. I remind the member for Everton that if he disagreed with this he should have voted against it, but he did not.

**Mr MANDER:** We brought these issues up.

**Ms SCANLON:** You have an opportunity as a member of parliament—

**Mr MANDER:** We brought all of these issues up.

**Ms SCANLON:**—to introduce bills, to introduce reforms, or to vote for or against.

**Mr MANDER:** All of these issues were raised.

**Ms SCANLON:** You did not vote against—

**Mr MANDER:** All of these issues were raised.

**CHAIR:** Order, members!

**Ms SCANLON:** Member for Everton, I make no apology for standing up for renters and making sure we have a fair renting system in this state. That is exactly what our government will continue to do.

**Mr MANDER:** As a renter, you would know. I agree. That is fair.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, there was no need for that comment. That is disorderly.

**Mr MANDER:** The minister labels herself that all the time. I was agreeing with that.

**CHAIR:** No. I am not arguing with you. Do you have a further question?

**Mr MANDER:** I do.

**Ms SCANLON:** I don't label myself; it is just factual.

**Mr MANDER:** Yes, but to make out that you understand their pressures is really unfair to renters.

**CHAIR:** What is your question, member for Everton?

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, one of the key announcements out the government's round table and then the summit was the 90 parcels of land that were made available by the Catholic Church to build homes on. It is two years down the track now—at least. What has happened to those parcels of land?

**Ms SCANLON:** Sorry, member. Can you repeat the first part of that question?

**Mr MANDER:** Ninety parcels of land were made available by the Catholic Church to build homes on. What has happened to that generous commitment by the church for houses to be built?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I think what eventuated was that that number was not actually the case that was put forward. I might refer to the director-general, who I suspect will refer to the deputy director-general to provide some more context.

**Mr Cridland:** Member, before I refer to the deputy director-general, Social and Affordable Housing Growth has been working closely with the archdiocese around the Housing Summit outcomes. I did want to mention that, in general, as a department we are agnostic about landownership. We will work with any organisation that can provide land to us that is value for money and provide secure long-term housing. To that end, we have a well-established history of partnering with faith-based organisations and the community housing sector to develop on land. Since 2015, 543 social and affordable homes have been contracted in partnership with faith-based organisations.

**Mr MANDER:** I raise a point of order, Chair, on relevance. I have asked a specific question about a particular offer that was made. I do not need a history of the government's interaction.

**CHAIR:** No. I am listening carefully to this. It is an introduction. We are coming towards the gist of the answer.

**Mr MANDER:** We do not have time for introductions, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Member, I am running this, not you.

**Mr MANDER:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** You have just wasted time bringing this up. Will the director-general like to come to an answer before we go to crossbench questions?

**Mr Cridland:** I will invite the deputy director-general of Social and Affordable Housing Growth up. While he is making his way to the table, I will conclude by saying that, of those 543, 376 of those homes are being delivered on land that was offered by faith-based organisations and 218 of those have already been delivered.

**Mr Betros:** Since the Housing Summit and the offer from the Brisbane Catholic Archdiocese that initially identified 90 sites, we have continued to work with the Brisbane Catholic Archdiocese around the viability of those sites for development. We have entered into a formal investigation deed with the Brisbane Catholic Archdiocese to investigate an initial three sites to work up a pilot process to continue to consider those. That considers the ability to develop those sites, the suitability for social and affordable housing on those sites, and the commercial and contractual development principles that would underpin the partnership with the Brisbane Catholic Archdiocese for those sites.

**CHAIR:** We will now go to questions from the crossbench.

**Mr KATTER:** A growing number of underutilised older private dwellings in Western Queensland represent a strong opportunity to affordably stimulate housing stock. Therefore, has the minister considered expanding the first home buyer scheme to existing homes, given it has had a very low uptake in those same areas?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. The first home owner grant falls under the Treasurer's portfolio, so it is a question that is probably better put to him and the department. What I would say more broadly, though, about underutilised properties is: if the member is aware of any properties where an owner may be willing to lease them or in some cases sell them to government, we are always looking to opportunities like that.

**Mr KATTER:** Does the minister identify that as an opportunity, given there is a large, growing volume of underutilised dwellings west of the Great Divide?

**Ms SCANLON:** This really is a matter for the Treasurer's portfolio.

**Mr KATTER:** It could help stimulate housing supply in the market in an affordable manner.

**Ms SCANLON:** If it is an existing building it is probably not adding to supply as the member suggests.

**Mr KATTER:** I am saying that it is underutilised at the moment.

**Ms SCANLON:** Yes. We have brought in a regional housing finance loan, which was a call from the LGAQ. The point was made that a number of people in regional and remote parts of Queensland struggle to get finance, so we have changed the eligibility to provide more financial support for people to enter into home ownership. That may address the broader point the member is making.

**Mr KATTER:** There will still be barriers, but I understand the scheme you are talking about. It has some merit. Minister, what steps have been taken to ensure there is not extra housing pressure on places like Mount Isa from Northern Territory itinerants coming through?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I know he has been raising this issue with me and the department. The reality is that there are a number of people coming to Mount Isa from the Northern Territory who do in fact have housing. I know the department has been engaged with the Northern Territory government. We will continue to work with them. I know the Northern Territory government also entered into a deal with the Albanese government to build more houses, so that may also alleviate pressure. I am happy to continue working with the member on this issue. It is a fairly complicated issue.

**Mr KATTER:** Minister, are you satisfied with the performance of Indigenous community housing organisations, and are they adequately resourced to rebuild and maintain government structures commensurate with competent property management?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I think Indigenous community housing organisations play a really important role in ensuring there is appropriate, affordable housing for First Nations people. It is a community controlled organisation. That being said, it is important those organisations adhere to all of the rules and make sure they are acting in the best interests of that community. We recently released the Our Place First Nations housing action plan, which has a dedicated fund specifically for the maintenance, repair and upgrades of Indigenous community housing. It was raised with us that that was sometimes a barrier for those organisations to make sure those homes are up to scratch. Obviously those Indigenous community housing organisations need to do all of the things that any community housing organisation is required to do in terms of financial sustainability and making sure they are looking after their tenants appropriately.

**Mr KATTER:** My experience is that it is generally poor, but there has not been much assistance to rebuild or maintain that. Minister, are you satisfied there is support there for them? When I have gone over, it is not there.

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. There is a whole lot of extra money in the Our Place First Nations action plan that I just announced only a few weeks or months ago that provides additional support for the capacity and capability of those organisations as well as more funding specifically for maintenance and upgrades, so there is more money and more support coming for those organisations. We will continue to listen and work with them. I know there is more money coming from the federal government through the Housing Australia Future Fund, but we have stepped in to help as well.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Minister, can you please tell us how many new dwellings have been built and completed with funds from the Housing Investment Fund since its announcement in 2021?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I will just get that information. This is a \$2 billion fund which provides \$130 million per annum. As of 30 June we have delivered 615 Housing Investment Fund supported homes for about 1,000 people. We have 313 new homes under construction and 109 acquired homes undergoing refurbishment works to get ready for new tenants. As I am sure you can appreciate, this is one of many funds. I know the opposition tries to pretend this is the only capital program that exists. It is not. It is one fund, and it is a new fund specifically working with community housing providers.

In relation to builds, we currently have: six new homes in Townsville for single parents and families under construction; eight new homes for young couples and small families on Thursday Island; 32 new homes in Hervey Bay for low-income seniors and women; 26 new modular homes for single-parent families in Emu Park; 126 new social and affordable homes in Chermside; 82 new homes for frontline workers and people on the Social Housing Register in Stones Corner; and 82 homes for seniors and people looking to downsize in Redcliffe.

**Dr MacMAHON:** From the numbers you have just provided, is the purchase of homes and construction still ongoing?

**Ms SCANLON:** The construction still ongoing was the list of projects I just outlined. There are 313 under construction right now and 109 acquired homes undergoing refurbishment. We have delivered 615 supported homes. Those have been acquisitioned. I think one of those projects was in the member's electorate—a hotel we were able to purchase recently. There was some work that needed to be done to support families. We have also been purchasing homes coming off the National Rental Affordability Scheme that would have just been in the private market which we can now use as social and affordable housing. These are being managed by community housing providers.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Minister, can you tell us how many community housing dwellings exist in Queensland now as opposed to when Labor took government in 2015?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I am happy to get you that number. We have been working hard to increase both public and community housing. We have a whole range of programs geared towards assisting community housing providers. I know in the most recent financial year about 50 per cent of the new stock we delivered was with community housing providers and the rest of that was public. I will have to see if I can get that figure. I may have to come back to you at the end of the session; I do not have that in front of me.

**CHAIR:** Member for Mirani.

**Mr ANDREW:** Thank you, Chair.

**Mr BROWN:** Point of order, Chair: this is the second time the member for Mirani has reflected on the chair.

**CHAIR:** I was ignoring him.

**Mr HART:** He just said 'thank you', Chair.

**Mr ANDREW:** I said 'thank you', Chair.

**Mr BROWN:** I think there should be some respect for the chair.

**CHAIR:** I absolutely agree. Member for Mirani, you are here because we granted you leave. Please think about how you conduct yourself here. Please ask your question.

**Mr MANDER:** Do not say 'thank you' next time.

**Mr ANDREW:** With reference to page 1, creating livable communities, is the minister able to advise approximately how many additional residences have been constructed in the Mirani electorate over the last three financial years and whether any consideration has been given to my earlier request for teacher dedicated housing to be made available in my area, particularly to help Sarina State High School, which is struggling to attract and retain teacher staff.

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. It will take us a little bit of time to get that data because it is quite specific to your electorate and over a period of financial years. I will endeavour to try and get that back to you.

In relation to key worker accommodation, we have made a commitment to build more key worker accommodation across the state for government employees. I can find out if it is specifically in relation to Sarina State High School. We are working with local councils to unlock genuinely affordable housing so key workers can afford to live in all communities throughout Queensland.

**Mr ANDREW:** Last month on the Townsville prison farm there were four three-bedroom houses destroyed. They did not have any asbestos or damage to them. Can the minister explain why these were not repurposed and used for other accommodation? I was called by some of the people there who said, 'We've got to destroy them. We can't repurpose them.'

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. They would be the assets of corrections. The department works with other agencies, but there are often a whole range of circumstances why sometimes these things might seem like a good idea on the surface, but there is a lot more complexity and a reason they may not have been utilised for the purpose you have outlined. I am happy to have look at it. I am not aware of the specifics.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Members, we have a number of things that we need to follow up. There are about eight. Minister, I will start by asking if you have any information on any of those issues.

**Ms SCANLON:** I am happy to respond to the member for South Brisbane's question around community housing. We now have owned and managed in Queensland 16,719. That is a 27 per cent increase in the time period that you asked for.

In relation to the emergency accommodation, the member for Everton went down a line of questioning. As the director-general had previously said, the average cost of emergency accommodation is \$144 per night. In relation to the member's question about the quality of all hotels receiving funding, getting specifics would require going to each individual specialist homelessness service and housing service centre. However, I can advise that the hotel referred to by the member was used on two occasions to help people sleeping rough. The two Queenslanders who temporarily used that hotel have since been found alternative accommodation.

**CHAIR:** That is two of those issues sorted out. Director-General, do you have some information?

**Mr Cridland:** I wanted to confirm for the member that the drug remediation costs are included in the unfair wear and tear number.

**CHAIR:** What other information do we need? I have here 'March quarter data, de-identification' and that we would come back to that at the end of the session. That was about the de-identification of that information. Did we answer that question?

**Ms SCANLON:** I want to stress for the purpose of the committee that the data, as of the most recent date that we have, has not gone through its quality assurance process. I am happy to provide it today, but I just want to be really clear that it has not gone through that process.

**CHAIR:** I think you have the answer. There is a process it needs to go through.



**Ms SCANLON:** Chair, I am happy to put it forward, as I said.

**Mr MANDER:** What is the risk?

**Ms SCANLON:** The risk is that it could be a different number when the department goes through that quality assurance framework and when I report it in the quarterly reporting that I have said. It may not be, but I am stressing that for the purpose of the committee. I am happy to provide that detail today.

**Mr MANDER:** We should have the figure, yes.

**CHAIR:** We will get back to you on that. Bear in mind, I would not be comfortable with having that published as part of our deliberations for that, but we will discuss that.

**Ms SCANLON:** It is 25,223 so actually a reduction.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**Mr MANDER:** Forty-five thousand down to 25,000?

**Ms SCANLON:** Applications.

**Mr MANDER:** Sorry, that was not the question. I thought you were going to give the waiting list.

**Ms SCANLON:** That is the number of applications on the Social Housing Register.

**Mr MANDER:** No, I meant the number waiting on the social housing waitlist, but okay.

**CHAIR:** There are two other issues—highest damage bill and confirm the date the portable bond scheme is to be implemented. Clearly, there is a bridging one happening now and there is another one there.

**Ms SCANLON:** Yes.

**Mr McDONALD:** Then there was the longest stay in the hotels.

**Ms SCANLON:** We advised the average. I think it is challenging to find the longest because we still do not have some data. Some of that data goes to the Commonwealth and not to the state which is why I cannot currently provide a yearly snapshot yet. It is not data that we have to hand that would be reliable at this point.

**Mr MANDER:** Chair, if you do not mind, because I do not want to misrepresent: Minister, what was the 25,000 figure that you provided?

**Ms SCANLON:** The number of applications on the Social Housing Register. The reason we talk about applications—

**Mr MANDER:** Okay. That is applications, not individuals.

**Ms SCANLON:** No, because applications is houses. A four-year-old does not get separated from their parents, so that is why we measure in applications generally, because that is the amount of houses.

**Mr MANDER:** So do you have the March application figure?

**Ms SCANLON:** That is publicly released when I release the quarterly data.

**Mr MANDER:** So the 25,000 is the June figure?

**Ms SCANLON:** Yes.

**Mr McDONALD:** Then there was the highest cost per night for the hotel. I think \$1,100 was talked about.

**Ms SCANLON:** As I just said, that is difficult for us to get because there are about 190 different specialist homelessness services that are operating on any day of the week so we have not got that yearly data yet because it goes through a process. If the member would like to ask me a question at a later point in time, I will be able to give that to him after we get that full yearly data in.

**Mr McDONALD:** Did you want to take that on notice now?

**CHAIR:** I think we have just indicated that it is going to take a while to get that information—many months perhaps—when all of that data comes in from all over the state. If it is a question on notice, we only have a number of days to get it in. It may be more appropriate to chase it up through other means. Another question is the date when the full portable bond scheme may be implemented. Is that something you can provide now, or is that something that will be provided further down the track? I know that work is ongoing on that.

**Ms SCANLON:** I may have to take that on notice, Chair. We are working through that detail at the moment. We have the bridging loan.

**CHAIR:** We will take that as a question on notice.

**Mr McDONALD:** Chair, likewise, could you take the question about the highest fee per night on notice with that qualification that if you cannot find it by Friday, but at least—

**CHAIR:** It is going to take many months to get that because the information comes in from all over the state and we only have a number of days to get that. I am recommending that you chase it up, but we cannot do that in the time frame of the question on notice that we have in front of us here. In relation to the portable bond scheme, we will get back with that one. The member for Mirani had a question on key worker accommodation in his electorate. Did you want to take that on notice?

**Ms SCANLON:** We would have to take that on notice. I am sorry, member for Mirani.

**Mr ANDREW:** Thank you; I appreciate it.

**CHAIR:** Okay, and if we can have that by 5 pm on 26 July. I remind members that they can perhaps get this information from the minister at a variety of different times. I am very reticent to overburden the staff.

**Mr McDONALD:** Without stretching across the state to look for that figure, do you have the highest number at the moment? What is the highest that you have to hand?

**CHAIR:** They do not have it.

**Ms SCANLON:** We do not have that on us at the moment. As I said, those specialist homelessness services operate independently so it would take quite a significant amount of work to get that. I am happy to have a broader conversation offline with the member to see whether we can address his question, though.

**Mr McDONALD:** What if you took on notice whatever is the highest number that you have at hand?

**CHAIR:** It has to be done by Friday.

**Mr McDONALD:** But that is what I mean. What I am saying is, without going to explore exhaustively to find the highest, just the highest you have on hand by Friday.

**Ms SCANLON:** The point I am making, member for Lockyer, is that some of that is through various different specialist homelessness services right now, so it would still take a lot of administrative work for the department to try to get that information. I am happy to have a look at it. I just do not know if we will be able to do it within that timeframe that you are asking for if I took it on notice. I am happy to have a conversation and see whether we can get you some further data. We know it is really important that we have provided that funding to specialist homelessness services so anyone is offered accommodation, and I want to make sure that money is being spent to deliver outcomes for vulnerable Queenslanders.

**CHAIR:** We are now well and truly over time for the examination of the housing portfolio area. We will adjourn for a 10-minute break.

**Proceedings suspended from 3.38 pm to 3.49 pm.**



**CHAIR:** Welcome back, ministers and officials. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of local government and planning open for examination. The question for the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, in 2015, there were 25,000 residential lot approvals. In 2023, there were only 18,000. Is this proof the Labor government have caused the housing crisis, increased the housing crisis, continue to increase the housing crisis, is not fit for office and Queenslanders just want to give the government the boot?

**CHAIR:** Okay. Rephrase. That is a great start.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** What's wrong with that?

**CHAIR:** Member, do you want me to go through this?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No. Minister, thousands fewer homes have been approved for vulnerable Queenslanders. Is this proof that the Labor government for the last 10 years has not had a proper housing strategy to deal with the supply issue we are facing in Queensland?

**CHAIR:** Minister, that was not perfectly rephrased, but I will give you latitude in answering that.

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I would say that the majority of approvals are determined by local councils. By the line of questioning, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is effectively having a go at the 77 councils in this state.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, you.

**Ms SCANLON:** You have asked me a question; I am responding.

**CHAIR:** Member, she has some latitude.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, Labor. I am having a go at Labor.

**Ms SCANLON:** I know you are selective of your criticism. What I would say is that on average per quarter, there have been more homes approved, commenced and delivered under our Labor government than under the LNP. When it comes to—and I am happy to talk about a whole range of data sources—the last quarter of 2023, construction activity on Queensland apartments and townhouses increased by 23 per cent. Nationally the increase was three per cent. The *Australian Financial Review* also reported on 24 May that Queensland's development approval wait times are ahead of both Victoria and New South Wales. Our Homes for Queenslanders plan is a comprehensive plan that has a whole range of actions in there to speed up approvals through our State Facilitated Development pathway and we are providing incentives as well through our the Infill Development Fund which I had the opportunity to announce this morning.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, in 2018, the Moreton Bay Regional Council put forward a planning scheme amendment to the state, an amendment which was supported by Jackie Trad and congratulated by Jackie Trad but Cameron Dick did not support. The amendment attempted to work with the state and Unity Water to coordinate infrastructure supply. Documents include significant attempts from council to demonstrate complexities and significant costs to community if the amendments did not proceed. Nearly 10 years on, developers like AVJennings have had to exit Caboolture West at a cost of \$17 million. If unlocking Caboolture West is now a priority for the Labor government, why did the government block the Moreton Bay Regional Council's planning scheme amendment back in 2018?

**CHAIR:** Minister, once again, flexibility with that.

**Ms SCANLON:** Thank you, Chair. I was not the minister in 2018, so I am not across all of the details of that particular matter, and I thought we were here to examine the SDS of this budget which evidently the member does not have any questions on.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Ten years of government.

**Ms SCANLON:** He does not have any questions on—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, I am interested in housing and the housing crisis.

**CHAIR:** Cease your interjections, member. Minister, please continue.

**Ms SCANLON:** You will have heard this morning Minister Grace announce the government's intention to declare the Waraba area as a PDA which is very important to our government, but I might hand over to the director-general to talk through the detail of the particular amendment you may be referring to.

**Mr Cridland:** Thank you, Minister. Chair, I will refer to the Queensland state planner and Deputy Director-General, Planning Group, Tess Pickering, to respond.

**Ms Pickering:** I would say with respect to Waraba, we have had the declaration today and in terms of historical activity of the government, there was a structure plan put forward, I imagine is what you are referring to, through the amendment led by the council. However, it was not in line with the capped charging framework that the state government still has and had in place at that time, and so the state ultimately, as a state declared development area, undertook the Caboolture West interim structure plan which was given effect to last year. Since that time we have had about 2,000 homes approved in NDP1—otherwise known as Lilywood—and the future stages of the precinct will now be unlocked via the PDA.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, in terms of collaboration with local governments and key industry stakeholders, according to the Service Delivery Statements, the department intends to ensure an effective planning system in collaboration with local government and key industry stakeholders. Meanwhile, if you were to have a look at submissions sent by local governments, industry stakeholders and their peak bodies under this Labor government, they have said things like, 'The LGAQ is extremely disappointed at the lack of consultation'; 'Changes are occurring at a speed which does not allow

adequate, genuine or meaningful conversation'; 'Yet another example of rushed regulatory amendments'; 'We strongly recommend against undertaking the proposed legislative change'; 'A lack of transparent process and decision-making'; 'Creation of uncertainty for community and development industry'; 'An absence of detail'; and, finally, 'Disappointed the public consultation has not occurred.'

We have also seen public advocacy against this government's lack of infrastructure funding from the LGAQ in key growth councils like Brisbane and Ipswich. In the context of these councils—

**CHAIR:** Member, that is—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Here is the question—

**CHAIR:** Oh!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** In the context of these councils, industry and public sentiments, can the minister explain how the department's Service Delivery Statements can be satisfied with this government's collaboration with local government and key industry stakeholders considering those comments I just quoted from key industry stakeholders?

**CHAIR:** Member, that was more of a story than a preamble—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Point of order, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** I am still speaking. My point is that was a very long preamble. It was unnecessary. In the future, can you just get straight to the question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, point of order. That is your opinion. The standing orders allow context to a question for the minister to properly answer a question so the minister does not mislead, and I have given context to the question I have asked.

**CHAIR:** It does, indeed. Standing order 115(b) says no long preamble as well. The point is cut down on your preambles and get straight to the question. The minister is about to reply.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I have been doing this for 15 years; I know how to ask a question. The minister can respond.

**Mr SMITH:** Fifteen years too long.

**CHAIR:** Member!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Member, please cease those reflections. Thank you for your unneeded advice. Minister?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. Frankly, I think we can tone down the theatrics. We are all adults here and I think we can engage in respectful conversation. What I would say to the member's question where he—

**Mr HART:** That is all you have done all day.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Members, cease interjecting.

**Ms SCANLON:** Where he quotes comments in relation to what I believe were the housing availability and affordability bill is that our government went through a parliamentary process, a committee process. It is entirely appropriate that it goes through consultation. Not everyone will always agree with some of these planning changes, but is the member seriously suggesting that we should not have passed these reforms and that we should slow down housing, because that is not the position of the government? We—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, you took half your own bill out of—

**CHAIR:** Member, cease your interjections.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You ripped half your own bill out.

**CHAIR:** Member, cease your interjections.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You ripped half your own bill out!

**CHAIR:** Member! Cease your interjections. Let the minister finish.

**Ms SCANLON:** And the measure that were removed from that bill was supported by the Local Government Association of Queensland. What I would say is we will continue to listen to the views of the Local Government Association of Queensland—

**Mr HART:** Because he should not have been there to start with.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Exactly.

**Ms SCANLON:**—the Property Council of Australia, the UDIA—all of whom have backed in our Homes for Queenslanders plan; a plan that for months the LNP suggested was too much.

**Mr HART:** And then you cut it.

**CHAIR:** Member!

**Ms SCANLON:** Sorry?

**Mr HART:** It was too much and then you cut it.

**Ms SCANLON:** We didn't cut the Homes for Queenslanders plan. You are confusing the—

**CHAIR:** Ignore that interjection. Feel free just to answer the question.

**Mr SMITH:** That is why—

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Bundaberg, you are not helping either.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, the Gold Coast city council has requested a number of changes to their town plan that would deliver thousands more homes than what is being placed at Arundel under the TLPI. Why have these changes been left to linger for months without the state government approval, yet the Arundel TLPI is being rushed through at what appears would be a state government at war with a local government and not listening to a local government and community on the ground?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. When it comes to the amendments that were put forward, there were a number of concerns raised by the planning department about that proposal which would have locked in underutilising key areas of the Gold Coast and also not substantiating how they were going to deliver on affordable housing for key workers in that city. You are right; I have stood up in place a proposed TLPI on the defunct golf course that is privately owned because we do not have a shortage of golf courses and we do need more affordable houses. That is why I put in place this TLPI that protects the environment, provides open public green space, but also critically delivers affordable housing. I note the member for Bonney and, presumably, the LNP do not support us delivering more houses. The member for Burleigh does not want us to go up. The member for Bonney does not want us to—

**Mr HART:** Absolutely, I don't want to you go up.

**Ms SCANLON:** I take the member for Burleigh's interjection. The LNP do not want us to go up. They do not want us to put housing on defunct golf courses, so I am unclear where the LNP are going to build houses. I think they need to come clean on what their plan is because they have just revealed a lot today.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We have, and it has been endorsed by all the stakeholders.

**Ms SCANLON:** I will hand over to the director-general to answer in some more detail around the reasons the department provided that feedback to the Gold Coast city council.

**Mr Cridland:** Thank you, Minister. I will ask the Queensland state planner to address that.

**Ms Pickering:** We work with all councils on local planning solutions. On the Gold Coast, that featured through what was called amendment 2 and 3. The state formed the view that there was back zoning and a potential undersupply occurring, either advertently or inadvertently, through the package as proposed. Parts of the package were endorsed but other parts were held over until the regional plan review was undertaken, which updated the targets last year.

What we heard through the South-East Queensland regional review process was that local governments wanted the state to step in and show leadership with respect to density, which we know is an emerging part of the solution—as is going out, as is going in. We worked with the local governments and they were very firm with us that they wanted the power and control to determine the local supply solutions through their planning schemes and that they did not want that coming directly from the state government. We have accepted that and we are now working at officer level on detailed amendments for each of the 12 local government areas in South-East Queensland to bring forward new supply.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, do you accept responsibility—and will you apologise—for the thousands of Queenslanders who are living in their cars, on the streets, in campgrounds and in tents because the Labor government have failed the people of Queensland—

**CHAIR:** Member, rephrase your question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:**—and have had a housing crisis and have not released enough land to build houses for these people?

**CHAIR:** Member, rephrase your question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, I am not rephrasing my question.

**CHAIR:** Then I am ruling it out of order. Do you have the next question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No. No doubt you would rule that out of order.

**CHAIR:** Try me.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am handing over to the local government shadow minister.

**Ms LEAHY:** Good afternoon. My question is to the minister. I refer to the Bundaberg council's conditions for the Bundaberg East flood levee—that all associated costs, including asset transfer fees, operations, maintenance and future upgrades, must be funded by the state government. Minister, has the government provided a response to these requests to Bundaberg council? If so, what was the response, and if not why not?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. Obviously, the Bundaberg levee is something that the council and community called for after those devastating floods. I might hand over, though, to the department to go through the technical detail.

**Mr Cridland:** Thank you, Minister. While I am looking for the information, I will ask the deputy director-general of public works to come up to the table.

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair: the question was pretty direct about whether they have provided a response and what that response was.

**CHAIR:** I understand what you are getting at. We are waiting for that answer now.

**Mr Atkins:** Can I clarify the question?

**Ms LEAHY:** It is in relation to the Bundaberg council's conditions for the Bundaberg East flood levee. Has the government provided a response to these requests to the Bundaberg council, and if not why not?

**Mr Atkins:** Not at this point in time. The full liability for the ongoing maintenance has not been fully calculated yet, so we have not put back to government a question around that.

**Ms LEAHY:** What about in relation to the asset transfer fees and any future upgrades? Have you responded to the council on any of those points?

**Mr Atkins:** No. It is still very early in the project. We are still going through the planning stages.

**Ms LEAHY:** When did the government receive the request from the council in that regard?

**Mr Atkins:** I do not have that, sorry.

**Mr Cridland:** On 8 May.

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, what steps have you taken to give certainty to the people of the City of Townsville given the ongoing crime and corruption investigations against the mayor of Townsville?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. These are appropriate matters for the CCC and not matters in which ministers—politicians—should be involved, for good reason. These are independent processes that need to be investigated. What I would say around confidence to the council is that I know the department has been in regular contact with the CEO and the Townsville City Council to make sure we are providing advice and support to that council so that they can continue to deliver for the people of Townsville. We had a community cabinet in that area recently. The Premier and all ministers were there, talking to the community. We continue to be engaged.

**Ms LEAHY:** Townsville people are quite unhappy and they feel quite embarrassed. How much longer will they have to wait for an outcome?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. The matter is before the CCC. I am sure the LNP is not asking me to be involved in a CCC process, for very good reason. That is an independent body that needs to be left to do their work. That is what they, presumably, are undertaking. If there are

any outcomes of the CCC that warrant me taking action then, of course, I will consider it at that point. Ultimately, that is matter for the CCC. I appreciate the views of the Townsville community but, as I have said, there are appropriate bodies where these matters need to be investigated. This is a democratically elected mayor, so those matters need to be considered by the appropriate bodies.

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, how much are local councils spending to manage fire ants in Gold Coast, Brisbane, Ipswich, Logan, Redlands, Moreton Bay, Somerset and the Scenic Rim because the state government has lost control of the fire ant problem?

**CHAIR:** You can stop there; you had the question in the first part.

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. That is probably a question better put to the Gold Coast City council or the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. It is not a process that the department of local government administers.

**Ms LEAHY:** Councils are talking about the problem they have, particularly with their managed and owned properties. Has the minister made any representations to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry about additional resources for local governments to help them control fire ants across their council managed and owned properties?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I know, being a cabinet minister, that there has been funding provided from both the state and the federal government and actions to deal with the fire ant issues that some communities are experiencing. I have been a part of some of those conversations as a cabinet minister and as a member of our government but, really, those are questions that are better put to Minister Furner or to the relevant councils.

**Ms LEAHY:** Are you concerned that local governments cannot make a claim against the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program for the costs they incur?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I am not across the detail of that particular program because it is not in my portfolio. Again, it is probably a question better put to the minister responsible.

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, the LNP recognises that a permanent Works for Queensland program is the No. 1 ask of Queensland councils. Will your government commit to making Works for Queensland a permanent program?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. We are very proud of our Works for Queensland program. We have obviously committed significant funds. In fact, I recently announced the next round of funding. I find the line of questioning interesting, because the Leader of the Opposition is known for cutting a number of programs in the local government space. I think the LNP's track record is not great in providing support to local governments. We will continue to support them through programs like Works for Queensland and the South East Queensland Community Stimulus Program. Matters of consideration about future budgets will obviously be considered by cabinet and by CBRC, but we are very proud of this program.

**Ms LEAHY:** There is no commitment to make Works for Queensland a permanent program at this stage?

**Ms SCANLON:** Significant funds have been provided already and any future budget matters will be considered in the appropriate format. We are here to examine this year and last year's SDS.

**Ms LEAHY:** Mr Chair, I have a question to the director-general. With reference to the 2024 to 2027 Works for Queensland program the guidelines in section 2.4 request long-term and strategic planning, regional planning, project scoping and approvals including native title clearances in the call for projects on 13 May 2024. Have these requirements been requested in the guidelines for previous Works for Queensland rounds?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. I have only been in this portfolio for six months, so I cannot tell you what was in previous rounds. I will ask the deputy Director-General, Local Government to come forward. Perhaps he can assist the committee.

**Mr Hannan:** May I please request that the question be repeated?

**Ms LEAHY:** Yes. With reference to the 2024-27 Works for Queensland program, the guidelines in section 2.4 request long-term and strategic planning, regional planning, project scoping and approvals including native title clearances in the call for projects on 13 May 2024. Have those requirements been requested in previous Works for Queensland rounds?

**Mr Hannan:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The 2024-27 Works for Queensland guidelines have been revised from previous versions of the guidelines. We took on significant feedback around improving the guidelines. This was based on feedback from the LGAQ, councils, CEOs and people who have been involved. As part of those improvements, we implemented a number of changes such as, for the first time, including a 20 per cent allocation for planning projects, which has been incredibly well received, to help councils plan for future projects and plan for other funding allocations. We also took on board feedback in relation to investing in the capability of our council staff. For the first time Works for Queensland are allocating up to five per cent of that allocation towards capability initiatives. In relation to that specific element, the guidelines have been updated to focus projects on council core priorities that have been picked up in existing planning documents within the councils. Obviously, those documents that were cited are cited as examples. We are working with all councils at the moment to assess their projects and work with them pragmatically in relation to the projects that they include in their Works for Queensland guidelines.

**CHAIR:** You have one more question, member for Warrego.

**Ms LEAHY:** I have one more follow-up question in relation to the 2024-27 Works for Queensland. Do these changes effectively mean for councils that their projects all have to be shovel-ready under Works for Queensland?

**Mr Hannan:** I thank the honourable member for the question. My hesitation is because it is such a broad program and that is why it has been really well received by councils. It does cover a broad range of projects. The allocation for this year is \$300 million over the 2024-27 period. One of the core criterion within that is to deliver the projects within that period of time. In terms of the definition of 'shovel-ready', I would offer that the project needs to be delivered within that funding period as a key criterion within the guidelines. If that fits within the definition of 'shovel-ready', it is.

If I go back to my previous point about the allocation of planning funding and other elements, we are working with the councils to make sure they get the best value out of their Works for Queensland allocation. It comes down to the definition that you refer to in terms of 'shovel-ready'. I would prefer to focus on the fact that within the guidelines we are requesting that the councils deliver within that three-year funding period, and we believe that is entirely appropriate.

**Ms LEAHY:** I have just one more quick question.

**CHAIR:** We will need to come back to it. We are already running out of time. You do have another block of questions, so you might want to hold that question. We will go to questions from this side. Minister, can you let us know how many homes the government has approved, commenced and delivered on average and how does that compare to previous periods? What are we doing to deliver more and how does it compare to alternative approaches?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Bancroft for the question. I am always happy to talk about this because compared to the period in which the LNP were in government, on average, we have approved, commenced and delivered more homes per quarter than when the Newman government was in power. In the last quarter of 2023 construction activity on Queensland apartments and townhouses increased by 23 per cent. Nationally, that increase was just three per cent. The *Australian Financial Review* reported in May that Queensland's development approval times are ahead of both Victoria and New South Wales. Now through our Homes for Queenslanders plan we are building one million more homes.

When we said we would slash red tape and support industry to build more homes faster, we meant it. We listened to industry which told us they have projects ready to go; they just need that little bit of extra support to make those projects shovel-ready. That is why we launched the \$350 million fund to get homes out of the ground, covering the cost of infrastructure charges and development application fees for new homes that are well located to existing services, public transport, schools and jobs. The fund attracted more than 220 applications in just two weeks with the potential to unlock more than 12,000 homes and 4,000 lots. More than 60 per cent of those applications relate to projects with development approvals that could be brought forward.

We also saw huge interest in our state facilitated development pathway, a new fast track for homes with a focus on affordable housing. More than 140 expressions of interest were received with proposals varying in scale from eight to 2,500 homes. They are initiatives that have been welcomed by industry with the Planning Institute of Australia's Nicole Bennetts saying—

PIA supports this pathway as an opportunity to bring forward innovative housing developments which deliver diverse and different forms of housing.



Villawood's CEO, Alan Miller, said—

Villawood has been in talks with the State Government about cutting red tape to fast-track development applications that deliver diverse and affordable housing.

...

We see the SFD team as a meaningful and positive initiative to deliver new and innovative forms of housing for Queenslanders.

Through our Homes for Queenslanders plan we are setting the standard with modular homes, free apprenticeships, new fast-track approvals and incentives for infill development. About 95 per cent of homes are built by the private sector and our plan makes clear our expectation for industry to start thinking innovatively. Meanwhile the LNP have been busy voting against 30,000 social and affordable homes and are now putting up barriers to stop 8,000 Queenslanders from buying their own home. The record and the contrast could not be clearer: a Miles Labor government who is cutting red tape and supporting industry to build homes in well located areas and an LNP who voted against the thousands of social and affordable homes and refused to stand up to Peter Dutton, who is blocking 8,000 Queenslanders from buying their own home.

**Mr BROWN:** Can the minister update the committee on the government's Incentivising Infill Development Fund and is she aware of any alternatives?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Capalaba for the question. As I said, when we said we would cut red tape and support industry to build more homes faster, we meant it. I am pleased to announce to the committee that the first tranche of successful applications has been green-lit under the Miles government's fund to get more homes out of the ground faster. A total of 60 applications to the Incentivising Infill Development Fund will share in \$52 million from the \$350 million fund to build homes close to existing services, public transport, schools and jobs. In total, the first tranche of successful applications will deliver 1,872 homes from gentle density developments through to apartments from Cairns to the Gold Coast.

Industry told us they had projects ready to go; they just needed that extra support, and that is what this fund is all about—making them shovel-ready. That is why we created this fund. It means we will cover the cost of infrastructure charges and development application fees, as I said, for those well located homes, particularly those with a focus on affordability. It is a direct outcome of the insights shared from both industry and local governments, bringing forward development activity while also ensuring those councils remain funded for critical infrastructure to support necessary growth.

As I said, this has been supported by the Planning Institute of Australia. They have suggested that the rapid uptake of this fund really shows strong private sector appetite in delivering more of these homes in areas that have good access to all of the things that we love and need. It joins a number of initiatives under the Homes for Queenslanders plan to unlock more homes in well located areas because we know right now there are pockets of land across Queensland close to public transport, jobs and schools that, frankly, are underutilised, and that needs to change if we are going to meet the demands for housing in Queensland.

Infill development projects help to provide more housing options for people. They can enable older residents to downsize in their local area and they give young Queenslanders an entry point into the market. I look forward to updating the committee and Queenslanders on future rounds, with the department prioritising the assessment of even more applications. Ultimately, this is about density done right and making sure that we really maximise opportunities on underutilised land with access to all of the transport, infrastructure and jobs that we need. This is real action for real supply, and that is what the government is delivering.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, can you please update the committee on how the government is working with faith-based organisations to unlock more social and affordable housing, and are you aware of any risky alternatives?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Bundaberg for the question. This government is committed to working with everyone who wants to deliver more housing. That includes—

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair: this is local government, isn't it, not faith-based housing?

**CHAIR:** No, it is planning and local government.

**Mr McDONALD:** Faith-based housing?

**Ms SCANLON:** It is planning as well, member.

**Mr McDONALD:** I do not understand that.

**CHAIR:** It is a planning issue.

**Ms SCANLON:** It is clear the LNP do not understand that this covers it.

**CHAIR:** Just keep going.

**Ms SCANLON:** That includes—

**Mr McDONALD:** This is a housing solution, not a planning solution.

**Ms SCANLON:** To deliver housing solutions you need planning solutions, member.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, everyone. Let the minister finish the answer.

**Ms SCANLON:** Thank you, Chair.

**Mr McDONALD:** The question was clearly about a housing solution.

**CHAIR:** I am sure that the minister is outlining a planning solution.

**Ms SCANLON:** This government is committed to working with everyone who wants to deliver more housing. That includes faith-based organisations, which we know have significant landholdings. In relation to planning, to facilitate more affordable housing we have created two fast-tracked planning approval pathways for social and affordable housing regardless of who the landowner is—that is, the ministerial infrastructure designation and the state facilitated development pathway. In 2022 our government changed the planning regulation to allow the ministerial infrastructure designation pathway to be used for social and affordable housing if provided by a community housing provider or under a state funded program. Since this time, the government has facilitated the following ministerial infrastructure designations on faith-based organisations' land: the Salvation Army has gained approval for 23 social and affordable housing dwellings; four projects comprising a total of 353 dwellings for Vinnies Housing and Mission Australia are under assessment; three projects comprising a total of 263 dwellings have been endorsed to proceed through the infrastructure designation process but are yet to be submitted for assessment; and since 2015, 543 social and affordable houses have been contracted in partnership with faith-based organisations supported by a \$225 million investment in state funding. Of these, 218 homes have been delivered, but we will continue to work with those faith-based organisations that are important partners in both housing delivery and homelessness services.

Unfortunately, there have been some deliberately misleading comments by the LNP as of late. At the LNP convention the Leader of the Opposition said—

**Mr HART:** I did not see you there.

**Ms LEAHY:** I did not see you there, either.

**Ms SCANLON:** It was published online for the benefit of everyone, unfortunately. They said that they would deliver '10,000 new community homes working with the faith-based sector. It won't cost a dollar, just a change in regulation'. I raise that because I would love to understand how the Leader of the Opposition thinks he is going to get 10,000 houses for free. When I talked through this proposal with the organisation involved, they had made it clear that they would need government to pay—

**Mr HART:** He is better at it than you are.

**Ms SCANLON:**—for both the ongoing leasing of the land—

**CHAIR:** Quiet, members.

**Ms SCANLON:**—and the development of homes. So the LNP's claim of 10,000 homes on church land for free is a blatant falsehood. Their promise is grossly exaggerated and misleading. The LNP's assertion that this plan will not cost taxpayers anything is deceitful. Faith-based groups are clearly requesting government funds to lease the land and finance construction.

**Mr HART:** That is a big call, isn't it? You are jealous that he has managed to negotiate better than you have.

**CHAIR:** Quiet, members. Cease interjecting. Will you stop talking over the top of the minister, please?

**Ms SCANLON:** I take the member's interjection. If the LNP have a multibillion dollar black hole on housing where they have exclusively provided funds for faith-based organisations, then they need to come clean about what deal they have done with taxpayers' money. We are open, as I said, to working with anyone, but we need to have processes that are accountable for Queensland taxpayers' money, and that is not what the LNP have suggested.

**CHAIR:** Minister, can you outline how the Miles government is partnering with councils to deliver on the Homes for Queenslanders plan?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. There is a very real contrast between the Miles government's infrastructure partnerships with councils and the alternative being put forward by the opposition. The Miles government is delivering record funding which we know our councils need, with billions of dollars through programs like Works for Queensland and the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program, and our government has a really proud track record of delivering genuine infrastructure partnerships with councils to help make sure Queenslanders have the services, infrastructure and homes for their communities.

Through our Homes for Queenslanders plan we are doing more with our \$350 million fund to encourage shovel-ready development by ensuring councils receive contributions for critical infrastructure by bringing those homes forward and helping those proponents make those projects into a reality, while the \$12.5 million of targeted needs-based funding will soon be available to councils for strategic planning and local planning scheme updates. The fund will make it easier for councils to deliver homes in the right locations that meet the housing needs of their communities and it is backed by a new streamlined amendment process that will enable planning scheme changes to be adopted as quickly as possible.

We are also making sure that the 2024-2027 round of Works for Queensland can help our 65 regional councils deliver critical infrastructure and services such as water and sewerage, roads and works for housing projects. This record \$300 million round takes the program's total value to \$1 billion and shows that our commitment to investing in communities across regional and remote Queensland is real, while the 12 South-East Queensland councils will also share in \$100 million in the new round of the South East Queensland Community Stimulus Program. I look forward to seeing the new pipeline of projects and continuing our strong partnership to deliver more homes for Queenslanders, because the reality is that slick slogans and words do not give councils the tools and partnerships they need but we will.

**Mr BROWN:** How is the Miles government streamlining the development application process to make it more efficient?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Capalaba for the question. Our Homes for Queenslanders plan is delivering a new system-wide housing plan to build more homes faster. We have listened to industry and we are doing things differently by pulling every lever and really streamlining development approvals and unlocking land to increase the supply of housing. The new state facilitated development assessment pathway is one of the key measures we have rolled out to help meet our target to deliver one million new homes. The fast-tracked process has been created to speed up the planning and development process by finding solutions for the development and infrastructure delays that sometimes slow down the delivery of new homes. It is a streamlined approval pathway where, once declared, applications can be assessed within a minimum of 75 days. Industry stakeholders tell us that in Victoria it can take anywhere up to four years to approve an affordable housing development, and that is the last thing we need in Queensland. That is why instead we are fast-tracking the assessment of development applications, particularly for infill housing developments that deliver the sort of diverse and affordable housing that we need.

Proposals that include affordable housing that our state needs will be prioritised to ensure we deliver homes where they are truly needed most. We opened the expressions of interest for the SFD proposal process and inclusionary planning pilot projects, attracting 145 expressions of interest. We have also expanded the ministerial infrastructure designation process to fast-track approvals for more community social and affordable housing developments. This allows for faster approval timeframes and greater certainty in delivering social and affordable housing outcomes. Already 39 social and affordable housing units have been through the MID process and today I can announce that another three projects are slated to be fast-tracked through the MID process: 159 social and affordable homes at Southport that are being invested through our Housing Investment Fund with the Brisbane Housing Co. and a really important partnership with the Australian Retirement Trust and Queensland Investment Corporation; 27 homes in Toowoomba that we are building in partnership with Vinnies; and 90 affordable homes on the Sunshine Coast proposed by the Brisbane Housing Co. Through the MID process we are able to streamline the approvals needed for large social and affordable housing developments across the state and get shovels in the ground faster.

While the Miles government is delivering new pathways to deliver more homes in areas where people want to live and raise a family and that are close to infrastructure, transport and jobs, unfortunately there are some politicians who stand in the way by making it harder for thousands of Queenslanders to own their own home.

**CHAIR:** We will move to a block of questions from the opposition and then go to the crossbench for about 13 minutes or so. Member for Warrego?

**Ms LEAHY:** I have a further question to the minister, following on from the previous block. Minister, did you ask for the Works for Queensland guidelines to be changed to shovel-ready projects so that there be photo-ops in the lead-up to the election?

**CHAIR:** Try again, member for Warrego.

**Ms SCANLON:** Chair, I am happy to answer the question. No. I would note that when the Leader of the Opposition, your Leader of the Opposition—

**Ms LEAHY:** We are asking about your guidelines.

**Ms SCANLON:** And I just answered the question but I will also give you some context because you provided context, too. When the Leader of the Opposition, David Crisafulli, was the minister for local government, he demanded that councils finish their projects in one year through the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program. We are saying that we want to make sure the projects are shovel-ready but the—

**Ms LEAHY:** The question is: did you ask for the guidelines to be changed?

**Ms SCANLON:** I absolutely provided input to the guidelines to make sure that the program delivered for Queenslanders. I do not believe that that was one of the aspects that we provided feedback on. I think it was more in relation to the way that that funding was being distributed and around the planning component based on some feedback. No, I reject the suggestion made about my involvement in that process.

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, at the LGAQ ROC assembly, which I attended and you dialled into, at Karumba on 11 July, councils raised with you the issue of the financial assistance grants being transferred to local governments in the financial year to which they apply rather than prepayment, which had been the previous practice. You said you were not aware of this issue but you would look into it. Have you looked into it and what advice can you provide?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I think we were talking in more detail about some of the individual matters and how that was provided. For context for the whole committee, the independent Queensland Local Government Grants Commission undertook a review of the financial assistance allocation methodology in 2021. Changes were implemented over a three-year period. The commission still distributes funding to Queensland's largest councils. These are the minimum grant councils under the new model. In relation to the way in which the Commonwealth provides that funding, obviously that is a matter for them.

I am aware of the concerns raised by some local governments. I know that they have directly raised this because I was in Canberra with local governments that are raising this with me and, obviously, were in Canberra to meet federal politicians. I have absolutely no doubt that they made representations to the federal government, which ultimately are the ones who provide that funding.

**Ms LEAHY:** I have a further question to the minister. Minister, at the South West Queensland ROC meeting held on 28 June, which I attended, your assistant minister, the member for Pumicestone, was asked about the same issue. She said she would look into it. Based on what you told the ROC assembly in Karumba on 11 July, why didn't your assistant minister brief you on this issue?

**Ms SCANLON:** She did. I do meet with the assistant minister regularly. She has raised these issues, as have local governments. As I said, though, this is a matter for the federal government around how they provide the funding to the grants commission, to the Queensland government and then it is distributed. Really, it is not a matter that the Queensland government controls directly and so those are matters for the federal government, but I am always happy to make representations on behalf of local governments. As I said, I know that the Local Government Association has already done that. They confirmed to me when I was with them in Canberra that they were making those representations to the federal government.

**Ms LEAHY:** If you were briefed on it in June, why did you tell the meeting at Karumba you were not really aware of the problem? You just said you were in Canberra.

**Ms SCANLON:** Member, I believe I was actually in an airport when I was zooming in so I cannot recall all of the specifics of that meeting. I would have to go back. What I can confirm is the assistant minister absolutely advised me of the feedback from local governments. Local governments have directly raised this issue with me. As I said, though, it is ultimately a matter for the federal government. I am happy to continue making the point to the federal government, but ultimately it is their decision.

**Ms LEAHY:** I have a further question to the director-general. Director-General, has the department made a submission to the current federal parliamentary inquiry that is underway in relation to local government and financial sustainability? Did the department do a submission?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. I understand we have. I will confirm that but I understand we have, yes.

**Ms LEAHY:** So the actual department made a submission?

**Mr Cridland:** I believe so. Again, let me check that. I do not want to provide the wrong information. I will check that quickly for you.

**Ms SCANLON:** It was either the department or me, but either way I have seen the submission that was put forward.

**Ms LEAHY:** I have a further question to the director-general. Director-General, were local governments advised that the Financial Assistance Grant payment for the 2024-25 financial year would not be prepaid? Were they advised at all?

**Mr Cridland:** I will ask the deputy director-general for local government to come forward, but, while he is doing that, I can give some of the timings. We were advised on 27 June that the Commonwealth had decided to bring forward a payment. That payment then came to us on Friday, 28 June and, of course, it has to be processed and paid. We paid it on 1 July, so the first business day after we received it. I will check with the deputy director-general what communication was made to local governments.

**Mr Hannan:** My information is consistent with that of the director-general. My understanding is that they were not given definitive advice that it would be prepaid. That advice would come through the Local Government Grants Commission in the first instance, from the federal government. They would notify them. It is my understanding—and I am happy to confirm, Director-General—that they were not advised officially from the federal government of that matter.

**Ms LEAHY:** I have a further question to the director-general. Is the director-general aware of any councils advising that they now have unforeseen deficits for the 2023-24 financial year due to the change in the timing of the payments?

**Mr Cridland:** Again, I will defer to the deputy director-general who has been in conversation with councils.

**Mr Hannan:** I thank the honourable member for the question. Yes, we are aware of those matters being advised. We are also aware a number of councils had also accounted for it in this financial year. Yes, last year's federal assistance grant was prepaid, but I believe it has varied over previous years. Yes, to answer your question, we are definitely aware of that matter. They have raised that with us and, obviously, we will take that into account when they are preparing their financial reports for preparation to the QAO.

**Ms LEAHY:** Do we know how many councils would have deficits due to this situation?

**Mr Hannan:** I thank the honourable member for the question. No. We will be made aware of those types of issues once their financial statements are audited in accordance with the process that they undertake with the Queensland Audit Office.

**Ms LEAHY:** I have a question to the minister. Minister, will you take responsibility for the deficit budgets that have been caused by the change in the payment year and advise the Queensland Audit Office that the deficit budgets for 2023-24 were caused by state and federal Labor governments' slack administration?

**CHAIR:** I am sorry, member. Minister feel free to answer that as you would. There are a number of issues there, but I will leave that with you.

**Ms SCANLON:** Thank you, Chair. As I have said, that payment is made by the federal government. When it comes to the QAO reporting obligations, as is always the case, they take into consideration things like this. I am certainly happy to and I was planning—we have had a conversation already, me and the department, around ensuring that the QAO understands the impact around the

timing of when that money comes into the local government's bank account and ensuring that that is considered in terms of the QAO process. We have already had a conversation about this. As is always the case, we would make that sort of representation to the QAO to ensure that councils are not unfairly treated.

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, when you became aware of this, did you pick up the phone to your colleagues in Canberra and explain to them the issues that this would cause for Queensland local governments?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. We had a local government ministers meeting and I know Kristy McBain came. From memory, I believe this may have been a topic of conversation. I would have to go back—I attend a number of ministers meetings. I know that this has been raised by multiple different people. The federal government knows that this is an issue. I find it pretty hypocritical, though, because I am yet to see the LNP pick up the phone to Peter Dutton and tell him to stop blocking investment in social and affordable housing.

**Mr HART:** That is not part of the question.

**Ms SCANLON:** I know it does not suit the political narrative of the member for Burleigh, because apparently it is only me who has to call on my federal colleagues.

**Mr HART:** You are always talking about picking up the phone. Did you pick up the phone and talk to your colleagues?

**Ms SCANLON:** As I have just said—

**Mr HART:** So you have answered—

**CHAIR:** Sorry, Minister, you can keep answering that.

**Ms SCANLON:** We had a meeting not that long ago where we talked about councils' financial sustainability and all of the different inputs and outputs of government funding. I will continue to put forward the views of the Local Government Association and the local government to the federal government, but I would also like to see the LNP stand up to their colleagues when it comes to social and affordable housing.

**CHAIR:** Member for Warrego, you may ask one quick question before we go to the member for Traeger.

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, the money was receipted on the 26th and you said that you then distributed it in July. Is Queensland the only state that did not distribute a prepayment on the 28th?

**Ms SCANLON:** I do not believe that is correct but I will hand over to the director-general to answer that further.

**Mr Cridland:** Thanks for the question. The Australian government advised on 27 June that they were going to make a bring-forward payment of 85 per cent of the 2024-25 payment to councils. That payment was actually received by our department on Friday, 28 June and it was processed on 1 July.

**Ms LEAHY:** Did New South Wales actually process theirs on the 28th?

**Mr Cridland:** You would probably have to ask New South Wales.

**CHAIR:** That is well outside the—

**Ms LEAHY:** I am just trying to get a comparison, Mr Chair, in relation to where Queensland sits with the other states.

**CHAIR:** Member, we are looking at the expenditure for the Queensland budget. I think it is a bit of a stretch to ask what New South Wales has done.

**Mr HART:** It is a financial year issue, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Who knows what New South Wales has done? I do not know if the director-general can furnish any further information regarding that.

**Mr Cridland:** Only that we processed it without undue delay. It was processed the first business day after receiving it.

**CHAIR:** We will go to the member for Traeger for a question.

**Mr KATTER:** Minister, the FAGs money distributed to councils is delivered in the spirit of equitability to smaller councils. I think it is fair to say that a growing number of local governments are unable to be sustainable due to a diminishing ratepayer base and a rising cost environment compared

to the larger councils. Have there been any discussions with your federal counterparts on addressing this disparity and maybe recalibrating how the FAGs money is applied to the big councils compared to the small, remote councils?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I know that he represents a number of very rural and remote communities. I am the ministerial champion for Mornington Island and this is a matter that they have raised with me. To directly answer your question: yes, we have raised this matter with the federal government. It was part of the conversation we had with the federal local government minister and I made the strong point about Queensland's geography and the very point that you just made about smaller rate bases and the essential services that they still need to provide.

More broadly, the independent Queensland Local Government Grants Commission did undertake a review. That meant some of the smaller councils did see an uplift in funding. I take your broader point and we continue to have that conversation with the federal government.

**Mr KATTER:** I am pretty sure this question still falls under your portfolio. Did the waste levy that was curiously applied to Mount Isa City Council go through Treasury?

**Ms SCANLON:** I believe the waste levy sits with either the department of environment and science and innovation or Treasury. The distribution of funds generally comes from the department of environment and science and, in some cases, state development.

**Mr KATTER:** It was Jackie Trad who drove it. I thought that was when she had the local government portfolio.

**Ms SCANLON:** The fund itself may sit within it. I would have to come back to you.

**Mr KATTER:** I will fire the question off. It was curiously applied to Mount Isa. The thrust of it was, as I understand, to stop cross-border waste. Curiously, it was trying to stop waste coming 600 kilometres from Tennant Creek to Mount Isa, which is absurd. Is that open for discussion or being readdressed, given the scheme has matured and it is fair to say that it has not stopped anything or made any material impact other than to bump up the cost for Mount Isa?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. This is not in my portfolio. I am going back in my memory of when I was the environment minister, which was a little while ago. I know that the minister for environment has been in conversation, though, with local governments. We know that they are facing pressures at the moment, so she is in conversation with them about how the annual payment will operate going forward.

I do not accept the premise of the question, though. When you see the results of the waste levy as it relates particularly to C&I and C&D, it has really driven new industries. The sky did not fall in, as was suggested by industry at the time. Actually, it has created a really thriving recycling industry and we have seen great recovery rates. It really does not sit within my portfolio.

**Mr KATTER:** It is pretty hard in remote areas, though, when you have 2,000 kilometres of travel.

**Ms SCANLON:** I appreciate the complexity of those regional councils. The view was that you wanted to have a hub-and-spoke approach with some of those bigger councils. Again, it is not in my portfolio. I know that Minister Linard has been in conversation with councils, so it is probably a question better put to her.

**Mr ANDREW:** Minister, on page 2 of the SDS, under 'Key Deliverables', it states that councils are to support the delivery of projects like the 2024-2027 Works for Queensland. Has the minister considered imposing a mandatory community benefit contribution on renewable developers to be paid directly to regional councils, many of whom are struggling to remain financially viable in the midst of the state energy transition and population explosion? Livingstone is a town of 1,200 people. It is a small council and is really feeling the strain.

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. Can I just confirm that you are asking for another fund; you are not responding to Works for Queensland?

**Mr ANDREW:** No, I am asking if the renewable sector, which is putting these things in these areas, can help bolster the councils.

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. It is probably a question you need to put to the energy minister. I am not responsible for the renewable energy transition. I know that there is a big piece of work, obviously, in delivering renewable energy jobs and projects. That is probably a better question for him because I know that he is doing a lot of work on social licence and ensuring we support communities through that transition.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Minister, back in estimates 2022, the then minister told me that the government was seeking advice from the State Planner about ways to prevent new developments from being approved on flood-prone land. Can you please give us an update on the outcome of that work and whether the government has considered, or is still considering, banning new residential development on flood-prone land?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I might ask the director-general to provide an update.

**Mr Cridland:** Thank you, member. I will ask the Queensland State Planner to address that for you.

**Ms Pickering:** I was not the State Planner in 2022 but, with respect to the flood management and the interaction with the planning framework and current work, the State Planning Policy in Queensland establishes that local governments have the ability to choose a risk tolerance appetite and amend their schemes accordingly, appreciating that our environment is changing and hazards are evolving constantly.

We have recognised that fact and sought funding from the Resilience Authority to essentially allow us to undertake a resilience maturity framework. To answer your question, the state is looking to step more into where we have before in giving councils support, particularly for flood risk management, which I think was your question.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Broadly speaking, yes. To put a finer point on it, Minister, is the government moving towards a process of banning development in highly flood-prone areas?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. Obviously we have our State Planning Policy that guides efforts to mitigate natural hazards. As part of the ShapingSEQ update, priority action 9 was developing a resilience policy maturity framework for hazard mapping and identifying 'no go' development zones based on comprehensive hazard assessments. That work is still underway.

**CHAIR:** We have reached the end of the time allocated to examine the proposed expenditure for local government and planning. We do not have any questions on notice.

**Mr McDONALD:** Chair, the director-general was going to clarify whether the department had put a submission in or not to the federal inquiry.

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I can confirm that I did put a submission into the inquiry. It actually addresses the member for Traeger's point that he made which we put forward to the federal government around financial assistance grants, along with a whole range of other measures.

**Mr McDONALD:** The minister made a submission.

**Ms SCANLON:** Yes.

**Mr McDONALD:** Did the department make a submission separately?

**Mr Cridland:** No. It was a submission from the minister on behalf of the Queensland government.

**CHAIR:** I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of public works open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I welcome back the member for Everton. I assume you have the first question.

**Mr McDONALD:** He does.

**CHAIR:** He does indeed. Member for Everton, over to you.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, for clarification, the procurement process has long been associated with public works. Am I right in saying that that function is no longer with the public works component of the portfolio?

**Mr Cridland:** Correct, yes.

**Mr MANDER:** Does that now rest with the Department of Energy and Climate?

**Mr Cridland:** Correct.

**Mr MANDER:** That means Minister de Brenni has oversight of BPIC, for instance.

**Mr Cridland:** No, that is separate. BPICs for building construction and maintenance is with our department, but the general procurement categories are with Minister de Brenni's department.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, could you describe your relationship with the CFMEU?



**CHAIR:** One moment. 'Describe your relationship with the CFMEU'—I am not sure where this fits in under examination of expenditure? I am not sure how this fits in under standing order 181(g). Can you explain a bit further?

**Mr MANDER:** I can explain further. The minister is responsible for the regulation of the building industry. We have seen what has happened down south and the comments made by the Premier up here distancing himself from the union. You yourself, Chair, have resigned from the union in recent times. My question is: how would the minister describe her relationship with the CFMEU?

**Ms SCANLON:** Chair, I am happy to broadly describe my interactions with the union movement and industry.

**CHAIR:** I think that is appropriate.

**Ms SCANLON:** I have met with organisations like Master Builders, the Property Council, the Housing Industry Association, UDIA and PIA individually more times than I have ever met with that union.

**Mr MANDER:** Have you ever received any financial benefit from the CFMEU?

**CHAIR:** Member, I understand where you are going with that, but I was about to rule that out of order. I am still very close to doing that. I do not know if the minister wants to furnish an answer. This really does not relate to standing order 181(g). How you can tie this to the budget is very interesting.

**Mr MANDER:** Chair, if you let me explain—

**CHAIR:** Okay. Explain a bit more.

**Mr MANDER:** Again, as I was saying earlier, the regulation of the building industry is incredibly important. The CFMEU plays a major role in the building and construction industry. It plays a major role in the provision of housing. There has been a lot of publicity about the criminal connections with the CFMEU down south. These questions are all about a minister who is part of the Left faction of the Labor Party. What is her relationship with the CFMEU? Does she have constant contact with them and has she received financial benefit with regard to donations to her campaign?

**Ms SCANLON:** Chair, I am happy to answer the question. Political donations are publicly disclosable in this state thanks to our Labor government. That would show that I have had no direct donations from that said union. As I have said, I have met with more industry representatives individually than that union. I have met with the UDIA more times.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, recently I read in the media where you were asked a question about the CFMEU and about their alleged standover tactics and bullying, and your response was, 'That's a matter for commentators to determine.' As the minister responsible for the regulation of the building industry, you should be concerned, I would have thought, by bullying and intimidation on work sites. Did you make that comment because you did not want to upset a supportive trade union?

**Ms SCANLON:** No.

**CHAIR:** Member, you are being quite argumentative.

**Ms SCANLON:** Chair, I am happy to answer the question. I note that he has neglected to quote what I said straight after. I would need to revisit my quote, but they were words to the effect of no bullying is acceptable. Any allegations of bullying have appropriate processes that should be reported and there should be consequences for that. The member is deliberately, I think, misleading by not providing the full context and the full comments that I made.

**Mr MANDER:** Let's follow on from that. As the Minister for Housing and Public Works, have you ever received any complaints or allegations of misconduct, corruption, criminal or intimidatory behaviour by CFMEU officials?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I have not been made aware of any allegations that would substantiate me to refer those to relevant organisations or bodies. Pretty much all of the organisations that I would meet with know what those appropriate bodies are to follow up any allegations. Obviously, any allegation of what you have suggested is unacceptable, and there are proper processes in this state for those to be investigated.

**Mr MANDER:** So you have not heard of any and therefore you obviously have not referred any on to any other authorities?

**Ms SCANLON:** No.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, do you have any concerns that poor productivity on building sites for new homes is delaying the delivery of much needed housing product?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. When it comes to productivity, we are doing a range of things to support the faster delivery of homes including modern methods of manufacturing which deliver much faster homes, particularly to regional Queensland. When it comes to productivity more broadly, there is an industry report that actually shows productivity is better here in Queensland than it is in Victoria and New South Wales.

Of course we will continue to work with industry. I meet with Master Builders and other organisations regularly in relation to that particular report that I just referenced—that is, the Australian Constructors Association 2023 report *Nailing construction productivity*, which suggests Queensland's productivity is stronger. It does attribute challenges to a fragmented industry and limited new technology in innovation. It advises opportunities that could be made for more efficient procurement and standard forms of contract. Those are all things that government continues to look at and implement.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, you have compared Queensland's productivity to other states. Most in the industry would say that productivity is around three days a week out of five.

**Ms SCANLON:** This is an industry report.

**Mr MANDER:** Sorry?

**Ms SCANLON:** What I just quoted from is an industry report.

**Mr MANDER:** Has the government done any calculation on the productivity impact of BPIC and the impact on housing affordability?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. Best practice industry conditions do not apply to any housing projects.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, they do indirectly because what happens in the public sector leaks out into the private sector. Does that mean you have not done any assessments or evaluations of that?

**Ms SCANLON:** Best practice industry conditions are a uniform document that takes privately negotiated EBAs from the private sector and says that government should deliver best practice. I would argue that actually many of these measures have been taken from the private sector and put into government's best practice industry conditions to set the benchmark of government delivering quality projects—

**Mr Hart:** No. They were put in place by the government.

**Ms SCANLON:** As I just said, member, many of these initiatives have been taken by privately negotiated EBAs.

**Mr Hart:** Back the other way.

**CHAIR:** Members, please let the minister finish the answer.

**Ms SCANLON:** I have answered the question. The member for Burleigh does not—

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, are high-density housing options currently unviable in Queensland because of BPIC?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question.

**CHAIR:** Member, you are asking for a big opinion.

**Ms SCANLON:** I am happy to answer. There is not a single housing project that best practice industry conditions currently apply to in the private sector. No best practice industry conditions apply to the private sector. There are only six projects in this portfolio that they apply to.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, why do interstate construction companies say they cannot, and will not, operate in Queensland when we have such a 'big build', in your words, because it is simply unviable because of BPIC?

**CHAIR:** Member, there is hearsay there. You are running afoul of the verification requirements in this particular section.

**Ms SCANLON:** Again I would say that productivity is better in Queensland than it is in New South Wales and Victoria.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, you have no concerns about productivity levels on worksites in Queensland? It does not concern you?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. We continue to make sure we are delivering housing projects in the best way possible. One of the ways I have aimed to try and deliver more productivity on housing projects is through modern methods of manufacturing, which LNP members

have criticised. It is exactly the sort of stuff that the Australian Contractors Association's *Nailing construction productivity* report calls for, which is more innovative options using technology to try and streamline housing delivery. It is what we are doing.

**Mr MANDER:** I might ask the QBCC commissioner some questions, if that is okay. Commissioner, I am not sure if this was during your time, but previously there was a CFMEU member on the QBCC board. Are there any CFMEU members on any of the QBCC boards, advisory panels or technical committees at the moment?

**Ms Levy:** No, there are none.

**Mr MANDER:** Have you been aware of any intimidating behaviour or criminal corrupt conduct by CFMEU officials or members towards commission staff?

**Ms Levy:** None whatsoever.

**Mr MANDER:** Therefore, you have never referred a matter alleging misconduct, corruption, criminal or intimidating behaviour by CFMEU officials or members to other agencies such as the police or the CCC?

**Ms Levy:** I have had no encounter with the CFMEU of that nature.

**Mr MANDER:** Therefore, you yourself have not been subject to any of that behaviour?

**Ms Levy:** I have not been subject to it, no.

**Mr MANDER:** That is good. Minister, will you ensure that no member of the CFMEU is given a role in the future of the QBCC?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. Ultimately, those matters go through more formal processes. I think the Premier has made it very clear that while these matters are being investigated the government will not be meeting with the CFMEU. That is the appropriate response.

**Mr MANDER:** Commissioner, how many complaints or matters has the QBCC referred to the CCC in the last 12 months?

**Ms Levy:** I thank the member for the question. The QBCC has referred seven matters to the CCC in the last financial year.

**Mr MANDER:** How many of those matters have been self-referred?

**Ms Levy:** All seven of those were referred by the QBCC to the CCC.

**Mr MANDER:** Commissioner, have you yourself been the subject of any complaints to the CCC?

**Ms Levy:** I have been, yes.

**Mr MANDER:** Is that a new one or is that ongoing?

**Ms Levy:** There are no open matters that I am aware of before the CCC. All have been unsubstantiated, that I am aware of.

**CHAIR:** I caution the member once again. We have talked about potential sub judice. I am just cautioning you about going down this track.

**Mr MANDER:** Commissioner, would you be able to provide the attrition rate of the QBCC for all staff broken down year by year for the last four financial years?

**CHAIR:** Member, can you clarify exactly what you mean?

**Mr MANDER:** Staff attrition rate.

**Ms Levy:** I thank the member for the question. I can answer the question in terms of turnover. That is how we would refer to those statistics. I have in front of me the turnover rates for the last three years and I will get the fourth year before the session is over. We consider turnover in terms of both permanent and temporary staff and permanent-only staff. In 2023-24 the permanent and temporary turnover was 13.65 per cent and the permanent-only was 9.1 per cent. In 2022-23 the turnover for permanent and temporary staff was 15.69 per cent and for permanent-only it was 10.34. The previous financial year to that was 2021-22. The permanent and temporary turnover was 20.9 per cent and permanent-only turnover was 12.11 per cent. I will gather the answer for the fourth year.

**Mr MANDER:** That is fine. You did them in reverse order, most recent to—

**Ms Levy:** I have given you most recent. We are seeing a decline in the turnover both of permanent and temporary and of permanent-only staff at the QBCC.

**Mr MANDER:** Good. Commissioner, question on notice 733 of 2024 shows that the percentage of internal review decisions that have been made on time has worsened every year. Would you care to comment on that with regard to what that means for builders and people building or renovating their home?

**Ms Levy:** I thank the member for the question. The internal review function was brought onboard effectively as a relief valve for review matters that were referred to QCAT. It was offered as an alternative and speedy pathway for review. The internal review function was established in QBCC just under 10 years ago. Since that time we have seen an increase in the number of internal review applications to the QBCC. The QBCC operates under a legislative framework which requires that decisions are considered within a 28-day timeframe. We allocate resources to assess all applications and we endeavour to assess all applications. There are on occasion from month to month times when we do not have sufficient resources in our internal review team to deal with all of the matters that come in an individual month.

It is critical that we keep our internal review team independent of the original decision-makers. We house the internal review team within our independent and quarantined division of the QBCC, which is referred to as the Integrity and Risk Division. The members of that internal review unit are not party to the original decision; nor are they part of the teams where the original decisions are made, so it is not easy to bring people onboard to increase the resourcing in that team. However, we have increased resourcing by three in the last financial year and have only just managed to fill those positions in the last couple of months, so we now have a greater number of resources in the internal review team and we anticipate bringing the number of deemed decisions down in this financial year.

**Mr MANDER:** The percentage of internal review decisions being made is directly related to deemed decisions as well; is that correct?

**Ms Levy:** Internal review decisions can be across a range of factors. It can be anything from licensing to defective works. The deemed decisions we refer to as a percentage of the total number of review decisions. For instance, in the last financial year there were 1,203 internal review applications received. We closed 1,211 cases, because some carried over from the previous financial year. Out of that there were 210 decisions that were deemed, which is 21 per cent of decisions being deemed in the last financial year.

**Mr MANDER:** Is there any filtering process or priority given to certain decisions? Are the deemed decisions regarded as having less impact? Is that the way it works?

**Ms Levy:** Our intent is to get to every possible matter. We do allocate decisions based on a priority matrix, so we do assess decisions. In assessing the priority of allocation, the more serious the consequences of a decision, the higher the priority it will get. The closer the matter is to a potential statutory timeframe, the higher the priority the matter will get. If there are obvious errors in decision-making in the original decision, that would also give it a higher priority. There are a couple of factors where we may give it a lower priority; for instance, if the statutory timeframe for giving a direction to rectify has already expired or where rectification works have already been completed. That is simply about prioritising where they are allocated. Once they are allocated to an IRU officer, the intent is that they will always be considered. We continue to allocate while ever we have availability. Some months all matters are considered and some months we simply do not have the capacity.

**Mr MANDER:** Thank you. Commissioner, just changing subjects: are you aware of any instances where a project that is within the project bank account framework has failed to pay subbies?

**Ms Levy:** I thank the member for the question. The QBCC has consideration of project trust accounts. Our responsibility in relation to those trust accounts is around auditing the requirements of the trust accounts to make sure they are set up in accordance with the legislative framework to consider the administration of those accounts properly. There have been a couple of recent instances where trust accounts have been associated with an insolvency and there is potential for some subcontractors not to have been paid as a result of those insolvencies, but we have not got any detailed knowledge of those subcontractors involved nor the amount of payments that they are owed.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, you have one more question before we go to government questions.

**Mr MANDER:** I have a final question on that. Commissioner, does that suggest that the project bank account framework has not worked in that instance? How would it be possible for subbies not to be paid?

**Ms Levy:** At the moment in those particular instances that is because the trust accounts are frozen while we are determining the appropriate action that might need to be taken in respect of those accounts. For the vast majority of accounts that we have audited, what we are seeing is moneys coming in and moneys going out and people being paid in accordance with what we understand to be the contractual arrangements. We have received very few instances of any issues raised against those. With respect to those trust accounts, once an insolvency occurs, the QBCC will freeze the accounts, if the licence has been cancelled, if there is an excluded individual, until we are certain that the appropriate party becomes the trustee to those accounts.

**CHAIR:** We will go to questions from the government side.

**Mr BROWN:** Can the minister update the committee on how the Miles government is rebuilding QBuild to deliver more homes for Queenslanders? Are you aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Capalaba for the question. Our Miles Labor government knows the importance of having a strong public builder. QBuild have a 160-year-old history. They are integral to building our state. Our QBuild workers are some of the first responders when our state is struck by natural disasters. They are among the first to arrive after fires, floods and cyclones, helping to repair our key infrastructure, including schools and social housing. They are out on the ground working in trying conditions to get our communities back on their feet as soon as possible.

We are determined to boost QBuild's capacity to build and maintain housing, as well as their capability to help communities because that is what good Labor governments do. Rebuild QBuild kicked off in 2019 to restore the frontline capacity of these essential workers after more than 1,600 jobs were slashed under the former LNP government. Rebuilding QBuild is also a key driver to get more tradies on the tools to help futureproof the state's construction workforce. I am proud to say the rebuild is on track, with QBuild targeting the employment of an additional 400 tradespeople and 100 apprentices. This will boost QBuild's trades-based workforce to 1,000 by 2046. These extra tradies are absolutely essential for particularly our regional, remote and discrete communities. More tradies on the tools will help us boost our local economy and record Big Build. It is the strength and skill of our workforce that will build the schools and homes of the future and inspire the next generation of apprentices.

To build QBuild's necessary growth, we are also upgrading the redevelopment of depot infrastructure across the state. I am pleased to report that 17 of the 32 depot upgrades and redevelopments have now been completed. In addition, we have also established three QBuild Rapid Accommodation and Apprenticeship Centres in Eagle Farm, Zillmere and Cairns. These centres provide key training opportunities for apprentices and will ultimately increase overall capacity to grow our manufacturing opportunities, like the Modern Methods of Construction program. Right now, over 50 apprentices are completing their apprenticeship with QBuild, and I had the opportunity of meeting with that group recently. I know a number of members of parliament did that as well. Our apprenticeship completion target is 60 per cent, and I am pleased to say they have gone well beyond that, with the current apprenticeship completion rate sitting at 85 per cent.

After QBuild's workforce was decimated by the LNP, we are rebuilding the foundations and providing more job-creating future careers for many young Queenslanders. This is a really important program and I am really proud of the work that our QBuild teams do right across the state, particularly after natural disasters. I have had the opportunity of meeting with a number of those staff and I want to say on the public record how grateful we are for the work they do.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, could you update the committee on how the Miles government is growing the construction workforce to help deliver on outcomes for the Homes for Queenslanders plan? Are you aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Bundaberg for the question. Obviously achieving our Homes for Queenslanders housing targets will be increasing the workforce across the construction industry for both private and government sectors. To support the housing Big Build, we are investing more to train and secure a workforce to deliver more homes faster. The Queensland Construction Workforce Fund was an action from the Homes for Queenslanders plan and is delivering initiatives to increase the number of apprentices and skilled workers and also addresses barriers to workforce participation.

One of these initiatives is our recent announcement that we are expanding free construction apprenticeships to all Queenslanders. The new scheme will train up to 2,250 extra carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, electricians and more over the next two years with free apprenticeships. This

comes on the back of the success of our free TAFE and apprenticeships initiatives that were specifically geared to Queenslanders under the age of 25. Listening to industry and prospective tradies, we knew there was more untapped potential across the economy. This will bring the total number of projected construction apprenticeships to more than 13,000 in the next two years.

Other initiatives under the Homes for Queenslanders Construction Workforce Fund include \$2 million for a Housing Construction Traineeship Fund, which is a really important program. Minister McCallum announced that fund I believe on the Gold Coast with an organisation called Esuarve who do great work with young Queenslanders. We want to see more programs like that which help young Queenslanders get a qualification. We also have our \$4 million Free Tools for First Years program. We are also repairing the damage done by, as I said, the LNP by rebuilding our construction workforce through Rebuild QBuild. This is a really important program.

Chair, I want to correct the record. I think I may have said 2046. I want to be clear that I meant to say 2026. I apologise if I misspoke.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Minister, can you update the committee on how the Miles government is using innovative methods such as modular homes through QBuild and with Queensland businesses to deliver on the Homes for Queenslanders plan? Are you aware of any risky alternatives?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Bancroft for the question. To build more homes faster, we are utilising our public builder, QBuild, as well as partnering with Queensland businesses to deliver hundreds of modular homes. It is an initiative that is speeding up production and cutting timeframes, especially in remote and regional parts of Queensland, and it is critical to us achieving particularly our social housing target. Modular homes can provide time savings of up to 75 per cent compared to a traditional build, taking three months on site instead of a year.

I can advise the committee that to date we have built 162 modular homes with Queensland-based businesses like Oly Homes, Hutchies in Toowoomba and Volo and at our QBuild Rapid Accommodation and Apprenticeship Centre. We will also be building many more, with the government making a commitment for 600 more modular homes. Ordering 600 more modular homes will help this part of the housing sector grow and they will go to locations including Bundaberg, Innisfail, Mackay and Warwick along with others throughout remote and regional Queensland.

It will get people out of temporary accommodation quicker, where the government is currently investing millions of dollars, and it will support good jobs, not only with these businesses but also through QBuild. In fact, I had the pleasure of joining the members for Cook and Mulgrave recently at the Cairns QBuild facility that we have recently opened where apprentices are applying their skills on the first eight modular homes under construction, including young people like first-year carpentry apprentice Jade, whose goal is now to take her skills back to the Torres Strait, which is where she grew up, and build more homes for families there.

These jobs and these homes, however, are all at risk under the LNP. Instead of being part of the solution, the LNP have taken every opportunity to attack modular homes and our public builder. The member for Burnett described modular homes built by Hutchies as 'too much'. The member for Scenic Rim labelled QBuild's involvement in public infrastructure as 'a negative outcome for all'. But this is nothing new, given the history of those opposite which was axing 1,600 QBuild jobs. The LNP say they are going to match our targets, but I do not know how you believe them when they bag out the businesses and our public builder who will help deliver these homes. Modular homes are a really critical part of us achieving our target.

As I said, the Australian Constructors Association's *Nailing construction productivity* report says that we need to be innovative, and that is exactly what the state government is doing. I am very proud of what our Labor government is delivering. We are really leading the nation in this space. Despite what some states may suggest, we really are leading the way in this space, and I look forward to updating the House on more modular homes that will be coming through soon.

**Mr BROWN:** Minister, I know that you touched on this in previous answers, but can you go into further depth about QBuild's network of depots, and are you aware of any alternatives?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I might keep this brief because it does touch on another question that I have answered. Obviously, our teams are working really hard to deliver upgrades and build more public infrastructure, but it is also important that they have up-to-date depots. Queensland's QBuild regionally based teams operate out of 20 offices and 35 depots as well as three rapid accommodation and apprenticeship centres. As I said, there are a number of those sites that are being upgraded at the moment. Looking ahead to year 2, 12 depots will be upgraded. We have already

upgraded a number—17. Some of those that will be upgraded soon are at sites including Kowanyama, Doomadgee, Palm Island in the Far North, Roma out west, and one site here in South-East Queensland.

The workplace upgrades are an investment to attracting and retaining tradespeople and apprentices to a rewarding career with QBuild. I was out with Jason Hunt recently at the new QBuild facility, and all of the staff there are loving the new depot that they have which is so much bigger and allows them to scale up the work they are doing. The message I want to send to all staff who work in QBuild is that this government backs them. We always have and we always will. Whether that is employing more apprentices, employing more QBuild staff or making sure their depots are upgraded, we continue to invest in our public builder, because that is what good Labor governments do.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. We will go to the opposition for about 13 minutes of questions.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, I would like to go back to BPIC, if I could. Could you explain the rationale of why, with procurement going to Minister de Brenni, BPIC was cleaved out and kept with your department, with you?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. Given that I am responsible for public works and housing, that particular policy stays with this department, as does the BPIC that is relevant to the minister for transport and obviously energy being the minister for energy.

**Mr MANDER:** Were the CFMEU consulted about that MoG?

**Ms SCANLON:** I do not believe so, but I do not make those decisions.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, I want to talk a bit more about the impact of BPIC and even how government departments are working around it because they do not want to be captured by it. It is our understanding that the TMR Riverway Drive project, which is listed at \$95 million, has been deliberately put at below the \$100 million threshold, knowing that BPIC would apply if they were to go over it. Whistleblowers have told the opposition that TMR knows that the project will be above \$100 million, but to avoid BPIC they have kept it at 95 and will immediately sign a variation to reflect the actual value of the project. Is the minister aware that departments are working around the system so that BPIC does not apply to them?

**CHAIR:** We have some issues there. Your question is based on something that needs some verification. Can you provide any verification?

**Mr MANDER:** It is a whistleblower so I am not going to, obviously.

**Ms SCANLON:** Chair, if I may?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms SCANLON:** I just answered the question around how best practice industry conditions apply. The policy sits with different departments. The area which the member for Everton just referenced does not sit in the portfolio that I am here to take questions on.

**Mr MANDER:** It is an example of how BPIC has been worked around because even government departments are not happy with those conditions.

**Ms SCANLON:** If you have a question for my portfolio, I am happy to answer it. The government's position is obviously for projects exceeding \$100 million; we have that policy in place. However, as I said, there are only six projects under construction that that policy applies to in this portfolio.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, has your department done any modelling on the impact that BPIC is having on labour shortages across smaller construction companies?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. As I have explained before, best practice industry conditions only apply to government projects that exceed \$100 million.

**Mr MANDER:** That is right. So they are sucking people out of the smaller construction companies and are one of the reasons we are having problems building houses.

**Ms SCANLON:** Government is building houses, and what I would say is that government needs to also attract workers to deliver hospitals, schools, public infrastructure, something that—

**Mr MANDER:** So taking them out of the private sector is a good policy?

**Ms SCANLON:** No, we are growing the construction workforce. I just talked about how we are growing the construction workforce and QBuild, how we are providing free TAFE and free apprenticeships.

**Mr MANDER:** Well, the same there. You have taken—

**Ms SCANLON:** I know that the LNP's position was to shut down TAFE campuses—gut TAFE, which actually provides critical training so we have more construction workers on the tools. Despite the fact that we are delivering more infrastructure than the LNP ever delivered—the only home you built was one for yourself over the road at 1 William Street—we are delivering both homes and public infrastructure and, on average, we—

**Mr MANDER:** What is it like, that building? I have never been in there.

**Mr SMITH:** You got evicted from it.

**Mr MANDER:** You wouldn't know, Tom. You only have a couple of months to go, matey.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, members. Cease the cross-chamber chatter. It is getting late and we are getting close. Can we just focus on the questions and the answers?

**Ms SCANLON:** To answer a question I answered in the last session, on average per quarter there have been more homes built, approved and commenced under our government than under the LNP.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, can you give me some details, then? What are the projects that the department is currently managing that are subject to BPIC?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I am happy to provide you with that information. I will just get that for you. I thank the member for the question. They are: the Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre; the Satellite Hospitals Program; the Gold Coast Secure Mental Health Rehabilitation Unit—something I am very proud of; the new Coomera Hospital—again, something I am very proud of; the Woodford Youth Detention Centre; and the Wacol youth remand centre.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, have any of the time lines or budgets of those projects been revised since they were announced?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. You are probably better off putting those questions to the line ministers. I know that Minister Boyd has already made public announcements specifically around one of those projects, but, again, you are best to put those questions to those line ministers. I can tell you that the Satellite Hospitals Program has been delivered on time and on budget.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, the previous premier made the promise that the QBuild facility at Eagle Farm would produce '80 homes this financial year'. That was announced in November 2022 so effectively that meant 80 homes in eight months. It is now 2½ years later. How many homes has that facility completed?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. I might refer it to the deputy director-general of public works please.

**Ms SCANLON:** Chair, I believe we have answered this in a question on notice—maybe not.

**Mr Atkins:** I am checking the number that we have delivered. As at 30 June, we had completed 15 homes at the Eagle Farm site and our production capability is 56 per annum now we are established.

**Mr MANDER:** What has gone wrong, Minister? The promise was '80 in eight months', and that was November 2022—they have only built 15.

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I am happy to get what the then premier committed to and what we have delivered. What I can tell you, though, is: it would have been pretty hard to deliver these if the LNP had been in power given you cut 1,600 jobs.

**Mr MANDER:** No, that is not the question. The question is a promise of 80 and you have produced 15.

**CHAIR:** Member, cease your interjections! The minister is answering the question.

**Mr MANDER:** It is relevance, Chair.

**CHAIR:** The minister has just started to answer the question.

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I need to substantiate the claim that you have made about the comments and how that aligns.

**Mr MANDER:** It is a quote.

**Ms SCANLON:** I think it is directly relevant. How do you deliver these homes if you do not have the construction workers?

**Mr MANDER:** But you do, so answer—



**Ms SCANLON:** We do, thanks to the Labor government.

**Mr MANDER:** Answer.

**CHAIR:** Member, I am running the show here. The minister is answering the question.

**Ms SCANLON:** What I can tell you as is, as at 5 July 2024, 162 homes have been completed and 134 are already on site. That is thanks to this Labor government's investment—

**Mr MANDER:** No, Eagle Farm.

**CHAIR:** Member, we are getting there.

**Mr MANDER:** Not very well.

**CHAIR:** We are looking for some verification, too, of what you stated in your question. The information is coming to you.

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I understand that on 1 August 2023 the former premier stated that QBuild would complete 15 homes. As at 30 June, QBuild has completed 15 homes at the Eagle Farm site. That information has been provided.

**Mr MANDER:** That is a selective quote. It was November 2022 when it was made. That is another announcement and another failure.

**CHAIR:** Member, you have got your answer. Do you have another question?

**Mr MANDER:** Yes, I have got the answer; you are right.

**Mr HART:** Director-General, in terms of the houses the member for Everton was talking about being built by QBuild and being used for social housing, does the department have any requirement for those to comply with the National Construction Code?

**Mr Cridland:** I thank the member for the question. Yes, they are built to comply with the National Construction Code.

**Mr HART:** Thank you. I have a question for the QBCC commissioner, if I could. I have been speaking to a gentleman in Townsville for the last couple of years who has taken the QBCC to task about the wind rating of his house. Normally I would not mention somebody's name at an estimates hearing, but the person has asked me to specifically mention his case. It is Mark Agius. Are you able to tell us how much the QBCC spent on external lawyers to take Mr Agius to QCAT, how much they spent defending the QBCC's position on the wind classification of his house, what the outcome of that was and if the QBCC had to pay him any money? In addition to that, are you able to tell us whether the QBCC has looked to see whether any other houses in North Queensland could have been built to the wrong wind classification?

**Ms Levy:** I thank the member for the question. I may have to get some clarification on the way through. First and foremost, I would like to say that I am concerned that it may not be in the public interest to air details of a particular case. This matter is still before QCAT in relation to matters associated with Mr Agius and I would not want to prejudice any outcomes in a QCAT matter. I would not want to address the specific case. I would have to come back to you in relation to the costs that have been incurred by the QBCC in relation to the matter.

**Mr HART:** Can you take that question on notice via the minister? What about the wind classification of other houses in North Queensland because it is a big issue?

**Ms Levy:** We have not gone out and done any specific assessment of homes. We tend to look at them as people bring them to our attention. Where we have complaints about potential defective work, we will look at each case on its merits on a case by case basis.

**Mr HART:** It has been shown that Mr Agius's house has been built to the right wind classification and the QBCC are aware of that now. Are you telling us that you will only look at these cases individually if somebody comes to you rather than being proactive and looking to see whether there is an issue? We have a lot of cyclones in North Queensland.

**Ms Levy:** As I said, I cannot comment on the particular case. There are particular circumstances that are associated with every single case. There are different builders and homes in different locations. It is appropriate that we look on a case by case basis to assess each case on its merits.

**Mr HART:** Are you confident that every house in North Queensland has been built to the right wind rating?

**Ms Levy:** That would be impossible for me to say but the job of the regulator—

**Mr HART:** Okay, thank you.

**Ms Levy:**—is to ensure we have the appropriately qualified builders to undertake the work. It is generally the role of a certifier to assess the built form of every individual home that has been built on the way through.

**Mr HART:** Sorry. Were you taking that question on notice?

**CHAIR:** I think you got your answer.

**Mr McDONALD:** The first part was about the cost.

**CHAIR:** You want the cost of this individual case that is before QCAT?

**Mr HART:** The cost to the QBCC in defending this position. If we can take it on notice; is that okay?

**CHAIR:** You want them to write to us about the details of the cost—

**Mr McDONALD:** No, not the details, just the cost.

**CHAIR:** The cost of one particular case that is before QCAT?

**Mr HART:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Do you really want to go down that path?

**Mr HART:** Yes. It has been going for years. It is a major issue.

**CHAIR:** I am unsure about how this relates to the budget. It is one case.

**Mr HART:** It goes to how much the QBCC has spent defending a position that is indefensible.

**CHAIR:** It is pretty tenuous. We will get back to you at the end and talk more on this.

**Mr ANDREW:** With reference to portfolio planning on page 2 of the SDS, I would like to ask the minister about the subordinate legislation that was tabled earlier this year that declares Mackay a state development area. I understand that such a declaration triggers compulsory acquisition powers under the act and that the stated purpose of the Mackay SDA is to allow the Coordinator-General to regulate the establishment of emerging industries including biomanufacturing and bioenergy. Could you please advise how many properties within the SDA have already been compulsorily acquired or earmarked by the department for compulsory acquisition further down the track?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Mirani for the question. This matter does not fit within my portfolio. It is Minister Grace's portfolio so it is a question better put to her and department.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I have a question that I think is best directed at the minister, as well. It is over 12 months now since the independent Developer Review Panel delivered its report recommending an accreditation disclosure and registration scheme for developers. Can you advise us on how the government has progressed its consideration of these recommendations and when a decision on implementing or rejecting them be announced?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. I know there was a considerable piece of work done on that proposal. It is still before government under active consideration. I cannot give you a timeframe because obviously that depends on when those government deliberations are made. When they are, we will obviously make those publicly available.

**Mr BERKMAN:** As part of those considerations, is the government looking at expanding the fairness in contracting provisions that are in the QBCC Act to stop developers shifting risks onto builders?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. That matter is still under consideration by the government. There were a number of proposals put forward which I do not have at the top of my head. I can inform you that, as with any government decision, we would make sure there was community consultation before those next steps. You would have an opportunity at that point to provide feedback as to whether or not you agree with the government's position.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I appreciate this might be impossible to answer, but do you anticipate any further steps on that before the October election?

**Ms SCANLON:** I cannot make that commitment. It needs to go through government deliberation processes.

**Mr ANDREW:** Can the minister please advise what steps the department has taken over the last year to address the productivity-destroying burden of red and green tape on the state's building and construction industry?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. This morning I announced the first tranche of our infill fund, which provides funds to unlock infill housing. We also have the state facilitated development pathway, which reduces red tape and streamlines approval for housing projects. There is a whole range of things government has been doing to try to fast-track, reduce red tape and encourage more housing across the state and support the industry to do that.

**Mr ANDREW:** That is great stuff. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** We have some further questions from government members. The member for Bundaberg has a question.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, in relation to public works, can you please update the committee on how QBuild is helping social housing tenants to maintain, upgrade and repair homes, and you aware of any risky alternatives?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. QBuild obviously does a really important job maintaining public housing in this state. The housing department is, of course, the state's largest landlord, and that is going to grow as we build more homes. Last financial year the department achieved a maintenance score of 98.8 per cent for social homes owned and managed by the department, and this would not be possible without our public builder, QBuild. They do really important work. I was in Far North Queensland recently where I met with a tenant who had been impacted by the natural disasters. QBuild had been able to get in there really quickly and repair that property. Again, I want to say a big thankyou for the work they do making sure not only that those homes are restored after a natural disaster but also that they have the quality that social housing tenants need and deserve.

**CHAIR:** Minister, can you outline how the Miles government is making sure—and this relates to an earlier question—subbies are getting paid for their work, and are you aware of any alternatives?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for the question. All workers should be paid for the work they do—on time, every time. That is why we brought in security of subcontractor payments. We are committed to ensuring subbies in the construction sector receive a fair pay for a fair day's work. Unfortunately, the rate of insolvencies in the construction industry is out of proportion when compared to other industries across the country, and we know the devastating financial and social impacts this can have, particularly on subcontractors. That is why we acted to support a deliberate change to the practice of payment in the building industry in the industry.

**Mr HART:** Yes, and it hasn't worked.

**Ms SCANLON:** I take the member for Burleigh's interjection. I would suggest he say that to the subbies who are getting paid because of those trust accounts. Since being introduced in March 2018, trust accounts have secured funds to the value of \$28.55 billion under 1,588 contracts. To support the transition, the trust account framework is being implemented in stages which relate to the contract type and value.

We are continuing to work closely with the industry to roll out the next two stages and further extend protection and security to those who need it. We listened to industry and we will continue to streamline the legislative framework to reduce costs, including recent changes that removed requirements such as independent auditing and mandatory retention trust training. My department is also working with a number of software providers at the moment, and we will continue to monitor industry readiness and market capability to support the implementation of the remaining phases.

**CHAIR:** We are almost out of time for government questions so I think we will take that time to wrap up your session. There are two outstanding issues: the cost incurred by QBCC regarding the North Queensland case and the wind rating; and the staff turnover rate for QBCC in the last year.

**Mr MANDER:** That is fine. We do not need that.

**CHAIR:** That is fine. You do not need that last one.

**Ms Levy:** I do have the answers for the staff turnover question. In 2020-21, the permanent and temporary turnover was 13.95 per cent and the permanent-only turnover was 7.07 per cent. In relation to the costs associated with external law firms associated with matters in relation to Mr Agius v Gedoun, I would have to note this is an extremely complex case. There have been a large number of complaints, inquiries, internal review applications, complaints about conduct processes, decisions in relation to this matter, and there are currently still eight matters before the tribunal. So far the costs are approximately \$440,000.

**CHAIR:** There are eight matters before the tribunal?

**Ms Levy:** That is eight matters remaining. There are a number of matters already heard.

**CHAIR:** That concludes the time for the consideration of the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Public Works. Minister, do you want to give some thankyou before we finish?

**Ms SCANLON:** Thank you, Chair. I want to thank you and the committee and all of the visiting MPs. I would also like to acknowledge all of the staff not only for their efforts in today's proceedings but also for what they do every day to deliver our Homes for Queenslanders plan. I particularly thank department staff: Director-General Mark Cridland as well as Matthew, Sarah, Sam, Angela, Graham, Danielle, Tess, Josh, Alice, Kirby and Sarah and the estimates team. I would also like to thank the Commissioner of the QBCC, the Independent Assessor and the CEO of the RTA. I would also like to acknowledge my office staff. They have worked really hard to help the government deliver the most ambitious housing plan in the state's history and ensure we were able to answer the committee's questions today.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Thank you to the officials, the staff, departmental officers and everyone here today. The committee will now adjourn for a break. We will resume at 6 pm with the examination of estimates for the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water.

**Proceedings suspended from 5.47 pm to 6.00 pm.**

**ESTIMATES—HOUSING, BIG BUILD AND MANUFACTURING COMMITTEE—  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MANUFACTURING; WATER****In Attendance**

Hon. GJ Butcher, Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water

Ms F Stewart, Chief of Staff

**Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water**

Ms L Dobe, Director-General

Ms B Zerba, Deputy Director-General, Regional Economic Development

Mr J Cowley-Grimmond, Acting Deputy Director-General, Water Resource Management

**Department of Transport and Main Roads**

Ms S Stannard, Director-General

**Sunwater**

Mr G Stockton, Chief Executive Officer

**Seqwater**

Mr W Harpham, Interim Chief Executive Officer



**CHAIR:** Good evening. We will now resume proceedings. For the benefit of those who have just joined us, I am Chris Whiting, the member for Bancroft and chair of the committee. Other committee members with me here tonight are Mr Jim McDonald, member for Lockyer and deputy chair; Mr Don Brown, member for Capalaba; Mr Michael Hart, member for Burleigh; Mr Robbie Katter, member for Traeger; and Mr Tom Smith, member for Bundaberg. The committee will be joined by other members who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions at the hearing.

I remind everyone that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at the chair's discretion or by order of the committee. 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 are permitted to use personal electronic devices in the chamber. I ask all present 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 are not permitted in the chamber.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2024 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water until 9.15 pm. We will adjourn for a short break between 7.30 pm and 7.45 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the time specified for the area as agreed by the House. I refer members to the program set by the House, available throughout the chamber and on the committee's webpage. I also 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 determination 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 for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water, the director-general, officials, staff, departmental officers and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials and advisors to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of regional development and manufacturing open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, I invite you to make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Thank you, Chair, and it is certainly a privilege to be here tonight to speak about what we are delivering in my portfolios. The Miles government is doing what matters for Queensland and this year's budget delivers \$11.2 billion of cost-of-living concessions to Queenslanders which is up 31 per cent on last year. At the last estimates I announced cost-of-living relief for South-East Queenslanders through our concealed leak remission scheme. Since then we have helped over 700 pensioners and around 4,700 customers as part of that program, helping everyday Queenslanders with the unforeseen cost of concealed leaks.

Delivering water security, jobs and regional economic development is a top priority. That is why the budget invests more than \$1.1 billion in Big Build water initiatives. In the north we have more than \$500 million locked in for the upgrade and raising of the Burdekin Falls Dam. On-site geotech works are underway and Townsville businesses are benefiting from contracts already awarded. The almost \$1 billion Fitzroy to Gladstone Pipeline is now more than 50 per cent complete. This project is supporting 400 construction jobs and new job-creating industries. Procurement is underway for a head contractor to deliver the Toowoomba to Warwick pipeline which will deliver long-term water security to Toowoomba and also the Southern Downs, supporting more than 400 jobs during construction.

I was recently in Cairns to announce that we have boosted our commitment to the Cairns Water Security project to \$195 million. I also joined Douglas Shire Council to announce funding for the second water intake for the Mossman River. We are also investing an additional \$32 million into the capping and the pipe work in the Great Artesian Basin. This builds on the Miles government's strong action to ban carbon capture and storage in the Great Artesian Basin.

Being in government is about leadership and making important decisions to benefit Queenslanders. In January I announced that we endorsed SunWater's recommendation to build a new wall for Paradise Dam. We are committed to restoring the full water supply and building a safe asset that will serve that community for the next hundred years. While the LNP criticised from the sidelines, we were getting on with this very complex project. Important early works are underway and a construction partner has been appointed. This is a challenging project, but we are committed to it and the safety of the communities downstream.

Late last year we completed Rookwood Weir—the largest water infrastructure project delivered in Australia in more than a decade. Water customers will begin to access their entitlements in the coming weeks, which is absolutely fantastic. In the south-east the biggest addition to the water grid since 2012 has reached a big milestone, with major infrastructure works complete. The South West Pipeline has supported more than 100 jobs during construction and is an important water security asset for the Scenic Rim.

I have always said that our goal was to make Queensland Australia's No. 1 destination for manufacturing and there is no doubt we are the envy of other states in Australia. Manufacturers are making the move to Queensland because we have created an environment where manufacturers thrive and they feel supported by government. I am pleased to announce tonight that Queensland will host the 2026 Australian Manufacturing Week conference right here in Brisbane—another fantastic opportunity to show off our manufacturing industry. This is the first time this conference has ever been held outside of New South Wales and Victoria. Manufacturing employs more than 180,000 Queenslanders and is consistently contributing more than \$20 billion to the state's economy. We are investing \$172.1 million in direct financial support into our local manufacturers, driving down costs and helping them to purchase the equipment and technology needed to grow and to create more jobs in their businesses.

This year's budget provides more support to the Made in Queensland and Manufacturing Hub Grants Program, investing a further \$25 million in funding. These programs are working, creating and supporting more than 7,900 jobs so far as part of that program. Some \$71.2 million has been invested into our six manufacturing hubs and in the last year the hubs have delivered more than 332 workshops and events attracting over 23,000 participants. The Miles government will always back our manufacturers because we believe in a future made in Queensland.

We continue to deliver the infrastructure our regional communities need to grow and thrive. Some \$4.4 billion of the \$6.6 billion invested in water infrastructure is in regional Queensland in big projects like those I mentioned earlier but also in those smaller but equally important council projects funded through Building our Regions funding—a program that has so far approved \$417 million in funding for 370 projects in 69 local government areas.

A new addition to my portfolio this year is the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program—a program that will see trains made by Queenslanders for Queenslanders. Workers are on site now at Torbanlea and at Ormeau and over \$1 billion in contracts have been awarded, delivering jobs and opportunities on the Fraser Coast and across Queensland. This is a legacy project that will generate over 1,300 jobs.

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair: that is actually five minutes and 50 seconds.

**CHAIR:** The member for Lockyer is timing you, Minister.

**Mr McDONALD:** I was being kind to let you go a little bit over.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Thank you, member for Lockyer. I look forward to talking more tonight about our plan. How is that, Jim?

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. We will now go to questions from the opposition.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you, Chair, and welcome to estimates, Minister. On 16 April this year, the minister disclosed to the parliament details of private correspondence between the opposition and Downer, the contractor for the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program. Can the minister advise who told him about this correspondence?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I am not sure what correspondence you are talking about.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, you answered it to your own government's Dorothy Dixier. A question was put to you in the parliament on 16 April and you referred to a letter from the opposition to Downer.

**CHAIR:** Member, do you have a printout of that page, of what was said?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Of *Hansard*?

**CHAIR:** Yes. It might help to jog the minister's memory.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Are you referring to the information from the member for Kawana wanting to visit the Downer site?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Correct. Who told you about that correspondence?

**Mr SMITH:** Point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** We have a point of order. This is early. Member for Bundaberg?

**Mr SMITH:** I wonder how a response to a question in the House is relevant to the Appropriation Bill before the committee right now, which is what we are here to examine.

**CHAIR:** I understand that the member for Nanango has just started on the first question. I am hoping that the member will relate this to the efficiency and effectiveness—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I certainly will. It is in relation to train manufacturing and I am very excited that I can ask the questions.

**CHAIR:** It would be helpful if you could provide some more information to help the minister understand this.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, you just referred to the correspondence from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition directly to Downer. How did you have access to that private correspondence?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I will have to get back to you on that one. I am not 100 per cent sure, prior to the parliamentary sitting, who had that conversation. I will certainly let you know. I think it was around opportunities that he was looking for to visit the site.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have a question to the director-general of TMR. Can the director-general advise if there are any contractual requirements for Downer to disclose private correspondence from independent parties such as the opposition or members of parliament with the minister or his department?

**Ms Stannard:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I am not aware of any specific contractual requirements, but I am happy to check with my team and get back to the member during the session if there is anything that I am not aware of that would require that disclosure.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you very much, Director-General. Of course, I am going to confidentiality and probity. What else is the minister and Downer, that you are aware of, discussing about the contract without TMR present?

**Ms Stannard:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I am not aware of any conversations that the minister is having with Downer without us present. I am aware of the meetings that we are in where Downer provide an update on the progress of the program and TMR is present in those discussions.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** In those meetings, would it be normal for Downer, under their contractual arrangements, to discuss correspondence that may or may not have anything to do with the minister and his office?

**Ms Stannard:** Not in those regular briefings that we are present in.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you, Chair. I am happy to move on.

**CHAIR:** We can come back to this.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, Downer met with government together with Anacta, the Labor aligned lobbyist, before the government made the commitment to manufacture trains in Maryborough. Downer provided the location to the government for that announcement and then Downer won the tender after the election. Now they are disclosing details, that we are aware of, of correspondence from the opposition. Is this a direction from you as minister and is this how business is done in Queensland under Labor?

**CHAIR:** You did not need that last bit of the question. Minister, I think you have the question.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I have a very simple answer, Chair: no.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** That is not how business is done?

**CHAIR:** No, the first part—not that part.

**Mr BUTCHER:** No to that part of the question. I do not direct people to do what you just said. No, I do not.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I think that raises more questions than answers. I will ask again, Minister: was the decision to provide Downer with the contract to manufacture trains made after a meeting with the government and Labor aligned lobbyist Anacta?

**Mr BUTCHER:** There is a very simple answer to that one, too. I was not the minister responsible for train manufacturing at that time. The minister for TMR was.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I will move on. Again, I direct a question to the director-general of TMR. Minister Bailey advised that the first train will only begin testing in late 2026. Would the director-general please advise if that information is still current?

**Ms Stannard:** I thank the honourable member for the question. That is still correct. The first train will enter testing in 2026.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** That is testing in 2026. When is it anticipated that the manufacture of the first train will begin at the Maryborough facility?

**Ms Stannard:** I thank the member for the question. The delivery of the Train Manufacturing Program remains on schedule. All trains are expected to be in service by 2032, in time for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Construction of the Torbanlea train manufacturing facility is well underway. Construction is on track for completion of that manufacturing facility in late 2025 and we are underway at the Ormeau rail facility as well. We are prioritising, at the moment, the design program to ensure the design is certified.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Can I have an answer to the question on the time line? I appreciate, Director-General, that you have read that out. When is the first train expected to roll off in the manufacturing facility in Maryborough and when is that first train expected to enter passenger service with QR?

**Ms Stannard:** I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. We are in a phase at the moment of the detailed design. We complete that detailed design during 2025 and then we commence manufacturing. I do not have a date on the chart in front of me for the commencement of that manufacturing. That train then enters a process of testing. There is then an acceptance phase by Queensland Rail and that is a regulated safety accreditation system. I do not have a date in front of me for when that would enter revenue service because it is subject to a process of agreement by Queensland Rail to accept that asset.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Director-General, the current advice is that Cross River Rail is expected to open in 2026. Just to confirm, there will be no new trains manufactured in Maryborough to secure Cross River Rail directly after that opening because the Maryborough trains will not be ready to go for Cross River Rail?



**Ms Stannard:** I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. These trains are not being manufactured to meet that timeframe. That is not the intent of this program of work.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** So no trains from Maryborough will be there for the Cross River Rail opening. The existing EMU trains, built between 1979 and 1986, were slated to be retired from 2025, to coincide with the new trains coming online. Can the director-general advise if the retirement of those trains will be, therefore, delayed or will there just be fewer trains in the QR fleet between 2025 and 2027?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Point of order, Chair: the portfolio discussions tonight are around the manufacturing of the trains and not about the timetables and the other fleet that is currently being used in the system. If the member has questions in relation to this, it should be more along the lines of her questioning in relation to the train manufacturing at the Torbanlea site and not the process of how the trains will fit into Cross River Rail. That should be for TMR.

**CHAIR:** I agree. Member for Nanango, that was more of a QR question. Could we focus on the manufacturing part?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you, Chair. On a point of order to the minister's comments, does that mean that the minister is saying that his department is now not able to answer questions about when the trains can start going onto a track? It is around timing, Minister.

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, that is more of an argumentative issue; it is not really a point of order. Could you move on to the next question?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** My question then would be: why is it that TMR does not have responsibility for train manufacturing? These questions are going to train manufacturing. I am talking about the retirement of a fleet and the director-general has spoken about the date when those trains will roll off. That is what I am asking.

**CHAIR:** I am trying to pick out the question.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I will put another question—

**Mr BUTCHER:** The director-general has already said that the design of the trains will be finalised in 2025. The manufacturing of the trains at the new facility that we are making now will be in 2026. The program runs after that with testing and moving forward. It is not about the old fleet, the EMU fleet.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Here we go; thought you had responsibility, Minister.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I do—of making and manufacturing trains.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** You are just proving that you are not, so let's move on.

**CHAIR:** Thank you both.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** One moment. Minister, did you have a point of order?

**Mr BUTCHER:** We are not going to do this all night, are we? We are talking about manufacturing trains here, not about the TMR portfolio and retiring fleets of trains.

**CHAIR:** We established that it is more of a QR question. Member for Nanango, do you have another question?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I do. I have another question for the director-general of TMR. When is the 65th and last train currently forecast to be finished being manufactured in Maryborough?

**Ms Stannard:** All trains are expected to be in service by 2032.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** So hopefully maybe in time for the Olympics. I have a question for the minister. The government stated that the contract for the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program is with Downer but Korean media is still reporting that South Korea company Hyundai Rotem will hold an 85.6 per cent stake in the joint venture. Minister, how much work is actually being done by the local people of Maryborough in relation to train manufacturing?

**CHAIR:** To aid verification of that, do you have a copy of that particular article?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** The minister knows.

**CHAIR:** Minister, we cannot verify that directly at the moment.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I am happy to answer the question.

**CHAIR:** You are going to answer it.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** We can refer to last year's estimates.

**Mr BUTCHER:** The program is obviously between those two parties but the manufacturing of the trains is actually happening in Queensland, in Maryborough. We made a commitment to build trains here in Queensland and that is exactly what we are doing as part of this program.

We are manufacturing the 65 six-car sets here in Queensland, in Maryborough. I was privileged enough last week to go and visit what we call the mock-up, which is a train that has been part designed so that some of our stakeholder groups, including disability groups, can be part of the design phase, which is what the director-general was just talking about. The fact that they were there while I was there was fantastic because I could talk to them about the issues that they have had on the previous trains that were made overseas.

I had that engagement with those people and they were ecstatic that they were actually being asked about their experiences. They were supportive of having these trains not only made here but also designed to fit wheelchairs, pushbikes and prams. There were some mothers there with prams. There were people with four-wheel disability scooters and other disability scooters. There were people in wheelchairs and deaf people and blind people all having some input into a Queensland-made train. I think that is exactly what we should be doing: manufacturing trains with support from those groups.

**CHAIR:** One moment there, Minister.

**Mr McDONALD:** Relevance, Chair: the question was about how many people were going to be manufacturing the trains.

**CHAIR:** I think that we did hear the answer. Did you have a further question, even on that particular one?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Yes, I do, thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, I have been advised that a 400-bed facility has been built at Maryborough as a work camp. Can the minister confirm that?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I can confirm that there certainly has been accommodation built, but I might pass over to the director-general for the exact number of beds. There has been a construction camp built for that site, absolutely.

**Ms Stannard:** Thank you, Chair. I thank the honourable member for the question. A site has now been constructed at Susan River—a workers' accommodation facility. I am just searching for the number in my notes but my sense is that it is a 180-bed facility that is available for use by workers who are coming to the site. Sorry, it is 200 beds at that facility at Susan River, and we have 80 workers currently occupying that facility.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** To confirm, Director-General, that is for people doing fly-in fly-out or drive in drive-out work in Maryborough?

**Ms Stannard:** I thank the honourable member for the question. At this time, while we are constructing the facility, there is a peak of workforce required to build the facility.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** For the construction.

**Ms Stannard:** In construction. We did not want to put pressure on the local housing supply at that time with workers coming in for a short period of time and renting in a location that has some constraints.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** So that is construction. I just heard the minister say, 'We are manufacturing trains in Maryborough.' Director-General, can you confirm for me that trains are currently being manufactured in Maryborough?

**Ms Stannard:** We are in the process of building a manufacturing facility—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you.

**Ms Stannard:**—which will be owned by the state.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** That is right. I have a question for the minister. I note that two prototype trains for the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program are actually being built in South Korea. Can the minister advise why?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I think we went through this during last year's estimates process. That agreement was done as part of a protocol to help design the train and understand what the trains that we are building will be like. I certainly think the director-general would have more information on that.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, you just said to me that you visited to see a prototype. Was that in Maryborough or in South Korea?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I think the answer to that is that they are currently being built in Korea to establish the manufacturing process. This will enable the transfer of technology and knowledge to the factory in Torbanlea. This is about starting the design phase, as we have talked about already tonight. We will be able to test that design without waiting for the full facility to be constructed in Maryborough first. We are getting on with the job of delivering, as we said as part of this program, 65 six-car sets to be manufactured in Maryborough.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Just a very quick follow-on, if that is okay, to the director-general. Can the director-general advise when each of these Korean-built prototype trains will arrive into Queensland?

**Ms Stannard:** I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. I cannot advise the date when those technology transfer trains will come to Australia. The intent is that they will be manufactured and brought to Australia so that workers can look and feel and touch and see the trains that they will then be building in Maryborough.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I confirm too, just to support that answer, that the mock-up that I talked about before was manufactured in Hervey Bay by Allweld, a local manufacturing company on the coast. It was a great opportunity for them to do that work and be part of this program.

**CHAIR:** A mock-up?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Basically, it is an empty shell of a train with a few bits and pieces in it so that we can get the design right. It is the shell of what a train would look like, including the cabin part of the train, so we can give people with a disability—the people who were there the other day—an idea of what it would look like and how they could move around in it. It is a train that has been prefabricated for the purposes of the design stage.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. We will go to questions on this side.

**Mr SMITH:** My question relates to the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program. Minister, could you please update the committee on how the focus on local content in the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program is delivering good outcomes for local businesses?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. The Miles government is bringing train manufacturing back to Queensland. Thanks to the \$9.5 billion Queensland Train Manufacturing Program, trains will be built by Queenslanders for Queenslanders. Queenslanders will be proud to know that train manufacturing in every sense of the word is taking place here in our own backyard.

Since a contract was awarded to Downer one year ago, more than \$1 billion worth of contracts have been let for construction of the facilities and the rolling stock that will come with it. Many of these contracts have been awarded to local businesses in the region, such as the Fraser Coast Indigenous owned businesses that I just talked about. Allweld Manufacturing has been awarded \$4.5 million to design and build the official train mock-up. Boodle's Concrete has been awarded a contract worth nearly \$10 million to supply and deliver concrete to the Torbanlea train manufacturing facility. This family owned business has its headquarters in Chinchilla but will operate out of its Maryborough depot and supply approximately 20,000 cubic meters of concrete. Local Queensland businesses will also supply goods and services that will support bogies and wheelsets; car body structure and rollforming; glazing; braking and air supply systems; passenger seats and a whole lot more.

While we are still going through the tender process for many of the components of these trains, what we will have is a contractor commitment to spend locally. A commitment to spend nearly \$1 billion with Queensland-based businesses—\$630 million of which will be in the Fraser Coast region—means more jobs for local people. This investment is having a positive impact on business right now—like for Stuart Taylor and his team at Surveyors at Work, a Hervey Bay business who are the lead surveyors for John Holland at the Torbanlea site. They are responsible for the civil and construction parts of the project and will be on site for the duration. Stuart tells how surveyors on his team for the whole three years have been working 10 days on and then home for four days. This project now allows those surveyors to be home, wake up with their families and go about their normal life. Stuart said there is nothing more meaningful than allowing families to stay connected and participate in their local communities. This is what the QTMP is all about. I am looking forward to hearing more stories just like that one.

**Mr BROWN:** With reference to page 83 of Budget Paper 3, will the minister advise the committee how the Queensland government's manufacturing industry support measures are helping local manufacturers with the cost of living?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. Good governments invest in a strong manufacturing sector. Thanks to our commitment to manufacturing, this sector is booming in Queensland. Queensland is winning the manufacturing state of origin, unlike the other night. We are the envy of all other states. We have created an environment where manufacturers thrive and feel supported. Manufacturers from New South Wales and Victoria are moving here, and they are seeking work previously done offshore and returning it to Queensland. That is our record.

To cement Queensland's reputation as a manufacturing powerhouse, I am pleased to announce that, for the first time ever, Australian Manufacturing Week will be coming to Brisbane in 2026. This is an exciting milestone as it is the first time this trade show will be held outside of Melbourne or Sydney. Queensland manufacturers regularly exhibit at this event, so it is an incredible opportunity to showcase Queensland's thriving manufacturing sector.

Manufacturing is one of the state's largest employers, supporting 180,000 Queenslanders with good, secure jobs and thousands of supply chain jobs that come with it. Opportunities for manufacturers are in abundance thanks to our investment in the Big Build, the Energy and Jobs Plan, the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program and the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Like many Queenslanders, though, manufacturing businesses are not immune from cost-of-living pressures. That is why we are providing direct financial support to manufacturers: \$121.5 million in Made in Queensland grants; \$33.5 million in the Manufacturing Hub Grants Program; more than \$7 million in grants to help manufacturers install energy efficiency systems to lower their energy bills; \$10 million in grants to help manufacturers use recycled materials and also reduce their waste; and \$71.2 million to manufacturing hubs at Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton, Gladstone and the Gold Coast. We have permanently funded these hubs and they are providing the expert advice and the training to manufacturers to take their businesses to the next level. This investment is saving local manufacturers millions of dollars, helping them to purchase the equipment that they need to grow. The best part is that that funding has created and supported over 7,800 jobs.

Looking at the industry now, it is hard to believe we inherited a sector almost 10 years ago where 10,000 jobs had been shed, trains were being manufactured overseas and grant programs had been slashed. Our plan to grow manufacturing in this state is working. We are doing what matters for our manufacturers and for Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, can you update the committee on how the Queensland government is working to increase the participation of women in Queensland's manufacturing industry?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. As I said before, manufacturing employs more than 180,000 Queenslanders, and the industry is still growing. We know that the manufacturing sector needs a big injection of workers over the next few years as manufacturing opportunities in the state continue to expand. This need presents a fantastic opportunity to get more women into manufacturing. The sector needs more workers, and we know that a more diverse industry means a bigger, stronger manufacturing industry into the future.

We launched a Women in Manufacturing Strategy specifically to attract more women into a career in manufacturing. As part of that strategy, we have worked with manufacturing businesses to roll out the manufacturing diversity, equity and inclusion toolkit to help attract and retain more women in manufacturing. Twenty workshops have been delivered, in Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Maryborough and Brisbane, resulting in manufacturers changing their recruitment processes to attract more women.

Our efforts do not stop there. This year we delivered our first mentoring series, pairing 14 students with female industry leaders to build networks and career development opportunities in manufacturing. We are partnering with Manufacturing Skills Queensland to roll out a Women in Trades Mentoring Program to bolster completion rates of female apprentices.

On International Women's Day we announced our first manufacturing apprentice award recognising outstanding female apprentices in Queensland. We also released our women in manufacturing docuseries, which followed the stories of 10 women in manufacturing as they overcame the hurdles in a male-dominated workforce to build a successful career in manufacturing.

Building on the theme of women making gains in male-dominated industries, this year we extended our promotion of women in manufacturing by partnering with the Brisbane Broncos. This partnership supports and promotes careers in manufacturing through the Beyond the Broncos program.

We will continue to work hard to grow the number of women in manufacturing through education, mentoring opportunities and promoting our female success stories in the industry. The message is getting out there. Since 2018 we have held 53 women in manufacturing events that have been attended by over 4,044 people. Chair, the Miles government is serious about growing our manufacturing workforce and especially about growing the number of women in the industry, and we are doing what matters in Queensland.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, this question relates to the exciting manufacturing energy efficiency grants. Minister, could you update the committee on how the manufacturing energy efficiency grants are supporting manufacturers to lower emissions and reduce energy bills?

**Mr BUTCHER:** My answer has gone missing. I can talk about it, of course. It was such a great question, member for Bundaberg.

**Mr SMITH:** It is with reference to page 1 of the SDS.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Let's start the Dixie by saying the MEEG grants have been extremely successful.

**Mr SMITH:** I think it is about Jabiru.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I could talk about Jabiru. We were there together. Cost of living is certainly, as we understand, front and centre for the Miles government and for individual businesses, and we are listening and we are delivering. Our manufacturers are benefiting from record investment in grant support programs which are driving down costs for manufacturers, ensuring they can grow and create more jobs.

This year we have seen the rollout of the \$7.1 million Manufacturing Energy Efficiency Grants Program as part of the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan. We know that there are significant opportunities out there for manufacturers as the world moves to decarbonise supply chains, and we are supporting our manufacturers to harness these opportunities.

Not only do these grants enable manufacturers to reduce their emissions and increase their competitiveness in a low-carbon future, but by installing energy efficient equipment they are reducing their energy use and slashing their energy bills. So far, 23 manufacturers have been approved for funding from this grants program. These projects are expected to achieve total electricity savings of 365,123 kilowatt hours per year. This means a reduction in 266 tonnes of carbon-equivalent emissions and annual energy cost savings of \$85,000.

I have met with manufacturers who have received these grants and it is clear: the new equipment they have installed is making a real difference—like Dean Street Bakery in Rockhampton who will save thousands on their energy bills thanks to the MEE grants that they received. I visited this fantastic local food manufacturer whilst in Rockhampton earlier this year. They received \$11,000 in funding to purchase more energy efficient prover retarder to cut down on energy waste. This has helped the business save over \$2,400 a year on their electricity bill which the owner, Sam Hayman, says will go a long way to easing the cost-of-living pressure for the bakery.

Another business benefiting is one in your electorate, member for Bundaberg—Jabiru Aircraft. They have been able to save almost \$3,000 on yearly energy costs thanks to a \$24,000 grant for new equipment. Our energy efficiency grants are supporting businesses with cost of living. Manufacturers told us they needed this support, and we listened and we delivered for them. Queensland manufacturers are now reaping the benefits—lower emissions, lower energy costs and more manufacturing opportunities. The Miles government will always do what matters for our manufacturing sector.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundaberg, you asked such a good question that I am going to give you another one.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, will you please update the committee on how the department is supporting regional development?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. The Miles government is firmly focused on delivering for regional Queenslanders because we believe that all Queenslanders should have access to important services, infrastructure and job opportunities no matter where they live. We believe that our regional communities are the engine room of our state. Unlike the LNP, whose leader fled regional Queensland to secure a safe seat on the Gold Coast, the Miles government is focused on the regions, not running from them. That is clear when you look at our significant investment in the Big Build and the Energy and Jobs Plan. Regional Queensland is the greatest beneficiary of this investment.

My department is working hard to ensure our regional manufacturers are well-placed to capitalise on the pipeline of opportunities coming to regional Queensland thanks to the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan. We are working across government to map out the products required for the energy transition, current manufacturing capabilities and what support our manufacturers need so we can manufacture more of what we might need right here in Queensland. Our regional manufacturing hubs work every day with local manufacturers and are focused on ensuring they have the skills, systems and equipment needed to develop advanced manufacturing capabilities and generate the jobs of the future. We have permanently funded our manufacturing hubs so the vital services provided by the dedicated public servants in our regions can continue. When it comes to water, the Miles government is delivering for regional Queensland right now and planning for our water needs. Of our \$6.6 billion in water infrastructure spending, \$4.4 billion is being invested in regional Queensland.

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair: I think we are talking about water in the next session.

**Mr BUTCHER:** It is about regional money going to regional communities.

**CHAIR:** The minister has only just touched on it, member for Lockyer.

**Mr BUTCHER:** It was only a very short point. Our record investment in our regions is something I am incredibly proud of. While projects are not immune from challenges, we have never cut and we have never run. We have stayed the course, we have kept our promises and we have delivered on our commitments. We will always do what matters for regional Queenslanders.

**CHAIR:** I will go to the opposition for some questions.

**Mr HART:** My question is to the director-general of TMR. Director-General, did your department provide any probity officers to a meeting that was held between executives of Hyundai Rotem and the Assistant Minister for Train Manufacturing, Bruce Saunders, in Maryborough?

**Ms Stannard:** I thank the member for the question. Is there a date?

**Mr HART:** At any date between when the contract was given. I understand that Hyundai wrote and an executive visited the country last year possibly.

**Ms Stannard:** Yes.

**Mr HART:** I want to know if your department provided probity officers to a meeting that was held between those executives and the assistant minister.

**Ms Stannard:** I thank the member for the question. I am not aware of us providing any probity officers to a meeting after the contract was awarded. Pre the contract being award we had a number of probity teams fully on board. Members were briefed; everyone was clear on their obligations. But not after the contract was awarded, to my knowledge.

**Mr HART:** If the Assistant Minister for Train Manufacturing had a meeting with a CEO of Hyundai Rotem, would that be a problem in terms of the contract?

**Ms Stannard:** I thank the member for the supplementary question. We do not hold a contract with Hyundai Rotem; we hold a contract with Downer. I do not foresee a reason there would be a probity issue because our contract is with Downer.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Chair, I have a question for the director-general. In an answer to a question on notice Minister Bailey was unable to advise how many seats the new trains will have. Is that information now available and does the contract specify the number of seats each train will have?

**CHAIR:** Do you have a copy of that question on notice, member for Nanango?

**Mr McDONALD:** No. 1232 of 2023.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I can ask a more direct question if that helps, Chair.

**CHAIR:** It just helps us understand where we are going with this.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** How many seats will the fully manufactured trains have and does that contract specify the number of seats each train will have?

**CHAIR:** Train or carriage?

**Ms Stannard:** I thank the member for the question. I understand you are asking about the total number of seats in the train when it is manufactured. We are in that detailed design phase now. My understanding is that the contract did not specify the number of seats because we then had a detailed design phase to go through. I am of the view that we now do know the number of seats now that we have been through that design review phase. I do not have that information in front of me, I do not think, but I think I will be able to come back during the course of the session and advise.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I remember back around 2010 when Anna Bligh ordered trains without seats, so I just wanted to make sure they have seats. Minister, where is the Office of Rural and Regional Development located?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I will hand over to the director-general, but I will just give the committee some information in relation to those positions, the team that was developed and where it is working on the regional forums we are hosting right across Queensland. We had community members form a group and talk about issues that involved each of the communities they represent. Since that time the new Premier has developed a new system of community cabinets and town hall meetings, and that group is dedicated to helping support that process with a new forum moving forward. I am more than happy to hand over about where they are located. I think there are still members in regional Queensland but also here in Brisbane. I will clarify that with the director-general.

**Ms Dobe:** Earlier this year we welcomed the Office of Rural and Regional Queensland to our department, transferring 20 full-time equivalent positions from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet at the machinery-of-government change. These staff are located in offices across the state including in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Toowoomba and Longreach.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, in the last couple of estimates we talked about the regional forum group, as I think it was called then. Did I just hear correctly that those regional forum groups have been overtaken by the role of the regional community cabinets?

**Mr BUTCHER:** That is correct.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** What has happened to the people who were on those regional forum groups?

**Mr BUTCHER:** To respond to the first part of your question, we are still doing regional forums on the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast, so that group still organises those local regional forums. The work they now do as part of the changed forum is in community cabinets and town halls. Members of the existing forums are no longer required because it is not the new forum moving forward, so they are no longer sitting on forums other than on the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, in the Office of Rural and Regional Development the only two forums you are holding outside of community cabinets are on the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast as regions?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Correct, but the community cabinets are also—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Western Queensland, Far North Queensland—

**CHAIR:** Member, The minister is finishing his answer.

**Mr BUTCHER:** The community cabinets are for the whole of the community to come and talk to government. The new program we have allows the community to turn up. To be honest, I think the smallest number of people attending community cabinets has been about 150 up to about 300 people. They are coming and having firsthand conversations with all of the cabinet, the Premier, Deputy Premier and Treasurer at these forums. We are getting a lot more engagement from the community in these forums than the original idea of the hubs, which they were only doing exclusively with the localised committee. The Premier made it quite clear that he wanted to engage with more people as part of the forums, and that is the new process moving forward. Not having those stakeholders in a forum atmosphere has now transformed into the whole community coming to the town hall meetings and community cabinet.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, can you confirm that it is invitation only for community cabinets?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I think the way the process goes is it is expressions of openness to anyone who wishes to come and then obviously those who choose to come. Two parts to the process are that we have the town hall but we also have the deputations which people apply for and can come to talk to the minister in relation to either stakeholder groups or community constituents.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Director-General, in relation to the Office of Rural and Regional Development that was moved into your department, how much was the cost to taxpayers as part of the MoG changes in that move? What was the cost to go from Premiers to your department?

**Ms Dobe:** I thank the member for the question. I understand there were no costs to the department for the MoG change.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you. I will move on to the office of the cross-border commissioner. I have to say, Minister, that it is great to see that the government has adopted a longstanding LNP policy to establish this really important role of a cross-border commissioner. We have been promising it since I think before 2017. Why has it taken the government so long to acknowledge that this is a much needed office? Who is the cross-border commissioner and where are they based?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. If it is that important to the LNP, they had three years in government. They probably could have had a cross-border commissioner back then. I acknowledge that members from the opposition were very grateful for us using this opportunity to get a cross-border commissioner, which I certainly acknowledge in establishing that position. There has been \$3.3 million over three years allocated to the budget. The new role will help manage cross-border issues and work collaboratively with New South Wales on service deliverability and matters to pursue economic opportunities. A commissioner exists currently in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia and they provide relevant examples of the need for this role in Queensland.

I acknowledge the support for this role from the mayor for Goondiwindi, Lawrence Springborg. I went out there several times to have conversations, particularly during COVID. The issues that arose after COVID showed the need for a Queensland cross-border commissioner to support the other commissioners in Australia. I have received very positive feedback about this announcement from mayors, particularly on those border areas. I am working with them to deliver those good outcomes. Work is underway currently to establish the office of the cross-border commissioner and the appointment of staff for that position. I look forward to announcing the appointment of the Queensland cross-border commissioner in the near future.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I note your comments in relation to the incredible mayor for Goondiwindi, Lawrence Springborg. The member for Southern Downs, the member for Currumbin and the member for Warrego have all been pushing for that role as they live on the border. I know that the member for Southern Downs in particular is keen to see that role positioned in Goondiwindi. Is that something the minister can commit to?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I will not be committing to any positions and where they are located tonight at estimates.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have given you an opportunity to announce it.

**Mr BUTCHER:** The commission is currently being set up and obviously part of that will be to find a location for that commissioner. We will certainly be taking into account your comments tonight in relation to the position. The body creating the position will be working with those communities on the border to get an understanding of what their requirements would be.

**CHAIR:** We will now go to government questions.

**Mr BROWN:** I think you have touched on this but can you go into more depth? With reference to page 97 of Budget Paper No. 3, will the minister update the committee on how the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program is creating more jobs for Queenslanders?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. The Miles government is creating good, secure jobs for Queenslanders. Whether it is the Big Build, as I have said before, the Energy and Jobs Plan or the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program, we are delivering the manufacturing jobs of today and those of tomorrow. By bringing train manufacturing back to Queensland, which I know you are very supportive of, we are ensuring there is a pipeline of work and a pipeline of job opportunities in the manufacturing and the maintenance of trains in those industrial towns and the supply chain that we need.

Our \$9.5 billion investment in the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program will support around 1,300 direct jobs in construction, manufacturing and the maintenance side of trains. The benefits of bringing train manufacturing back to Queensland will certainly be long lasting. It is already generating new manufacturing jobs in Maryborough and the Fraser Coast in particular. Because of our commitment to local content, businesses are moving to Maryborough and employing locals, and this trend will continue. It is not just Maryborough that is benefiting. Beenleigh Steel Fabrications here in Brisbane was awarded the contract to supply the steel for the Torbanlea facility, and Boodle's Concrete from Chinchilla will supply the concrete, as I said before.

At the same time, we are investing over \$23 million in this year's budget to revamp the Rockhampton railyards. The industrial part of the precinct will provide opportunities for rail manufacturing and rolling stock maintenance, bringing skilled jobs to Rockhampton. There certainly are many other opportunities at that facility for large-scale industrial work. Like I said, the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program is creating jobs now and maintenance jobs into the future.



Since the contract was awarded to Downer one year ago, more than \$1 billion worth of those contracts have been let for construction of the facilities and of the rolling stock moving forward. More than 100 people are currently working on site at Torbanlea to build the train manufacturing facility, and 96 people are working on the facility at Ormeau. That is jobs for families. We are emphasising opportunities for First Nations Queenslanders as well in doing this. At Torbanlea more than 10 per cent of workers are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and First Nations manufacturers like Allweld are engaged on the project already, as I said, with the mock-up.

All of this is good news, delivering jobs on the ground already as we talk, but it is just the start. People are excited about being part of building the new trains and maintaining them into the future. They will not need to leave Maryborough. They can work on a significant project like this one and raise their family locally, growing our regional communities. The QTMP is so much more than just building trains; it is region building and it is futureproofing, and it is something that I am certainly proud to be helping to deliver.

**CHAIR:** Minister, can you update the committee on the progress of the Made in Queensland grants program, including how many businesses have been supported, the jobs created and the private investment generated?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the chair for the question. Manufacturing is one of the state's major job-generating industries, with over 180,000 Queenslanders employed in the manufacturing sector. I have always said that I want to see more goods stamped 'Made in Queensland', because that means more local jobs and certainly a stronger economy here in Queensland. As the pandemic reinforced, all Queenslanders benefit from greater domestic manufacturing capabilities rather than relying on overseas imports. The 2024-25 budget invests a further \$20 million into the Made in Queensland grants program, bringing total investment by this government to \$121.5 million for that program.

This program is vital for manufacturing. It supports our local small- to medium-sized manufacturers to adopt industry-leading equipment, technology, processes and systems that go with it. It means manufacturers can purchase new equipment, increase efficiency, expand production lines and, most importantly, create more manufacturing jobs in Queensland. To date, the Made in Queensland program has created and supported more than 6,500 jobs and generated more than \$261 million in private sector investment in manufacturing.

I am pleased to announce that round 6 of the Made in Queensland program awarded 35 grants to manufacturers, bringing the total projects supported to 164. I look forward to meeting the manufacturers who have been successful under round 6 to hear about the exciting opportunities that they can harness thanks to our grants and to meet the apprentices and the new workers who they have put on on the back of these grants coming into their business. That is always the part I enjoy most about the manufacturing side of my portfolio.

One of the companies benefiting from the Made in Queensland program is Priestley's Gourmet Delights whose factory I recently opened in Acacia Ridge. Thanks to a \$2.4 million Made in Queensland grant, this local dessert and savoury food manufacturer has opened a new state-of-the-art, AI-powered facility, creating 21 brand new jobs in Queensland. This includes 12 jobs for women with an additional 30 jobs expected to be created as part of their business expansion plans. If anyone knows anything about cakes and manufacturing, it is me, Chair. The grant allowed them to purchase high-tech equipment meaning they could onshore the production of their famous lava cake, and if you have not had one, you should, Chair.

**CHAIR:** You should table some.

**Mr BUTCHER:** They have also been able to increase product packing rates, reduce factory bottlenecks and reduce costs. The equipment was built by MEX Engineering, a local engineering firm that specialises in robotic assembly systems and advanced manufacturing lines, showing these grants have a flow-on effect not only to the main businesses but also to other local manufacturing businesses as well. If you are a manufacturer in Queensland, watch this space because there will be a further round of Made in Queensland grants coming very soon. We will always support a future Made in Queensland by Queenslanders.

**CHAIR:** I will go to the member for Capalaba for one question or so.

**Mr BROWN:** With reference to page 1 of the SDS, will the minister please update the committee on the progress of the Manufacturing Hubs Grant Program, including how many businesses have been supported, jobs created and private investment generated?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. The Miles Labor government's \$33.5 million Manufacturing Hubs Grant Program is certainly helping manufacturers become more productive, supporting economic development and generating jobs right across particularly regional Queensland; mindful, these grants are only delivered outside of South-East Queensland. It also creates and maintains high-performing workplaces through increased management capacity, leadership and the development of skilled employees, including apprenticeships and traineeships in advanced manufacturing. Since we began the program, it has funded over 81 projects, creating and supporting more than 1,600 new jobs in the manufacturing industry. These projects are estimated to generate \$45 million in private sector investment. This grants program is supported by our manufacturing hubs in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone and the Gold Coast, and businesses throughout Queensland have been using their grants to achieve great things.

One example of this is Gold Coast manufacturer, Emery Industries, that secured a \$144,000 grant in round 2 to purchase a fibre laser cutter. This will improve their capacity to manufacture tube and sheet metal products, supporting 13 existing employees and creating two new extra jobs. Combined Metal Fabrication, that I recently visited in Townsville, have been successful with a round 3 grant valued at \$158,000. In that business, Craig told me that the grant will support the purchase of new equipment, including a laser machine, will lead to growth and to help them employ another five people as part of that business. This story is echoed right across the state, including in Cairns with Perrott Engineering with a \$624,000 investment with five new jobs; Pacific Hoseflex in Burleigh where our \$99,000 in support created six new jobs in the Burleigh electorate; and in Arundel where AMEC Plastics will utilise a \$252,000 grant from round 3 to purchase new equipment and generate seven brand new jobs in that workplace.

Each of these jobs is real people, Chair, who get the chance to work closer to home in regional Queensland, the chance for good, secure jobs created thanks to the support from the Miles government. This grant program is just one of the programs created under Labor that is making a real-world difference, helping so many manufacturers. I would encourage all small to medium-sized Queensland manufacturers to get on board for round 4 when it opens shortly. The Miles government is certainly doing what matters and will always back our manufacturers so they can grow in the industry.

**CHAIR:** We will go to the opposition for 15 minutes worth of questions before turning to the member for Traeger.

**Mr McDONALD:** Minister, I understand you have been contacted by the Independent Brewers Association and the Queensland Distillers Association who are not satisfied with the outcomes of the draft Queensland Craft Brewing Strategy. Will you delay the finalisation of the plan as requested by the groups, given they are the key stakeholders and their obvious level of dissatisfaction with the structure proposed actions and outcomes?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question and I understand. I ran into the distillers as I was about to go to meet the member for Nanango, so I had a bit of a heads-up; I have a fantastic Dixer here for you, member. We are proud of the fact that Queensland was the first state in Australia to develop a craft brewing strategy, and it is clear that the industry is growing. There are more than 110 craft brewers and 80 artisan distillers in Queensland, employing more than 1,800 people in Queensland, and contributing over \$100 million annually to the Queensland economy. The industry is significant. It is a regional employer with almost 30 per cent of distillers and 23 per cent of craft brewers located in regional Queensland.

Key initiatives from the original strategy that we have implemented include introducing an artisan liquor licence. This has led to significant growth of artisan distillers in Queensland. The distillers told me recently at a conference, at which I am aware the member for Nanango also attended, that it is the best type of licence in the country for them, establishing Australia's first BrewLab at Coopers Plains to support the \$1.1 million in funding to assist brewers develop and test their recipes and products, and the introduction of a Certificate III in Food Processing with TAFE Queensland, with 86 students having completed that. On the back of the strategy initially with craft brewers, the department is certainly working very closely with the Independent Brewers Association and the Queensland Distillers Association to help them grow both industries, and we will continue to explore.

The new strategy will certainly be convened with both the craft brewing industry and the artisan distillers, and we will certainly continue to engage with both of those groups and anticipate finalising the updated strategy with new initiatives and support measures with the support of the independent distillers as well.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, that was a great Dixier answer, but, to clarify, were you planning to delay the finalisation of that plan to take into consideration those concerns?

**Mr BUTCHER:** We were certainly looking at the draft which came out, and after conversations with the distillers, we certainly understood that there were concerns about the strategy moving forward.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** So you are taking that on board.

**Mr BUTCHER:** We will certainly be taking that information on board and continue to work with both the distillers and the craft brewers on the strategy.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, the same groups have also requested that the government reopen negotiations with the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation to review the artisan producer and takeaway licence, so that can be included in the strategy. Is that something you have been undertaking, Minister?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Certainly it is an opportunity for the Attorney-General who runs that, but you are right in what you say. I certainly have been working with the department to also get an understanding of a way forward. It is one of the big parts of the sticking point with the distillers in and around the strategy moving forward, so I will continue to advocate on their behalf as the minister responsible for distilling here in Queensland, particularly with the Liquor Act 1992, to see if there is a way forward to support that industry even further.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I will put this question to the director-general, but if that is not appropriate, I am happy to go back to the minister. In relation to those discussions, is that something that the department is doing directly with the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation?

**Ms Dobe:** Yes, we have been talking to that department about this proposal.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** That is good news. It will be good to ask the Attorney-General as well. I want to clarify something in relation to the Office for Rural and Regional Queensland in the forums. Minister, last year you were unable to provide me with an answer in relation to the forum meeting minutes. I now know that they have moved on to another role. I will not put words in your mouth. Minister, when were the forum members advised they were no longer required?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I will hand this one over to the director-general as her department certainly looks after that, but what I can say is that in late 2023, expressions of interest for new members to participate in the 2024-25 series were called; however, as I said before, due to the significant expansion of the community cabinet program, the members were not progressing to that. I will get the director-general to talk more.

We identified actions from the 2022-23 regional community forums, as you talked about before. They are currently also being progressed through a regional collaborative governance model, and I will ask the director-general to talk a little more about that. The actions that came out of the forums are still being actioned through the department level, but I will get the director-general to explain a little bit more.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** When had they been informed?

**Ms Dobe:** All of those members—the term of their membership ended at the end of last year, so they all knew that it was finishing then.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Were they advised that it was finishing and that the government was no longer having community forum groups?

**Ms Dobe:** Yes, because that was the end of their term. It went to the end of last year. That was when it was still being led by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, before that team transferred over.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you. Minister, my question is in relation to your previous answer that two groups have been kept in the regional forums. Is it the case that you have maintained the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast groups to ensure your members for Caloundra and Gaven are re-elected?

**CHAIR:** Member, that is clearly hypothetical because it is based on a suggested idea or theory. Did you want to rephrase?

**Mr McDONALD:** It is a good question.

**CHAIR:** I did not say whether it was a good or bad question but can you rephrase it?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I am happy to answer. The quick answer is that they were the only two that were recently established. The decision was made to continue with those two because they had only recently kicked off with new members to move forward.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Who are the members of those committees? Is that publicly available on the website?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Can we get back to you on that?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Yes, you can.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I do not know if we are allowed to tell a committee the names of the members on the board.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** That is fine. Your previous ones were on a website somewhere. That is where we found them.

**Mr BUTCHER:** We will find out if they are or not.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** In relation to the regional forums, Minister, I note what you said about the community cabinets and that if you register and then pass and get invited you can go. When is the government planning to do a community cabinet in far western Queensland? How do community members access your community forums if they live at Quilpie, for example?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. The new forum is supported by Premier and Cabinet. They are deciding and choosing the locations for the new community forums that are happening.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, you just said that it was now in your department. The community forums have been overtaken by the community cabinets, which are now run out of your department.

**Mr BUTCHER:** The community cabinets are led by the Premier's office.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** What, then, does the office of rural and regional development do if you no longer do the community forums and community cabinets are held out of Premier and Cabinet? Can you explain what they are doing?

**Mr BUTCHER:** The idea is to make sure that the whole of cabinet goes to communities in Queensland. We have done community forums from Cairns right down to the Gold Coast, including in Mackay, Townsville and other regional communities. What the team does is attend and support the function of the community cabinets and the town hall meetings. Their particular role is ensuring the deputations that we have with each of the individual groups or members are noted, the feedback to each of the relevant ministers from those community forums is collected and there is a way forward with the future of the statements that they made and the issues that they have.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you. I have a question for the TMR director-general. I note that the Department of Transport and Main Roads appointed Turner & Townsend to provide project management office and cost advisory services to the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program. That happened on or around 13 November 2023. That is about five months after the contract with Downer was signed. What was the delay in the appointment?

**Ms Stannard:** I thank the honourable member for the question. As is common practice for projects of this scale, we have a multidisciplinary team on the state side to manage the program. That is a combination of public servants and external specialist consultants. We have a range of specialists. They span project management, rolling stock design and environmental sustainability. The appointment of each of those external advisers is undertaken in line with the Queensland Procurement Policy to ensure transparency and value for money. All of those appointments were done in accordance with budget and government approvals. After the end of the procurement phase, we then established a team to support our stateside project through the delivery phase. My understanding of that timing is that it would have allowed us to test the market and appoint appropriate project managers for the delivery phase.

**CHAIR:** You have a few more minutes before we go to the member for Traeger.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I think the director-general has an answer about seats for the trains.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Wonderful. How many seats?

**Ms Stannard:** The member for Nanango asked how many seats will be on the QTMP trains and what the contract specified. The contract specified the train is to be fully compliant with the Commonwealth's disability legislation. These trains will be. They will be the most accessible in the country. They will be fully compliant. They will have a compliant access path through the train and they will go beyond compliance with the addition of train boarding bridges and electronic levelling control.

The QTMP trains will have 320 seats and space for 660 standing passengers. That will result in total capacity of 980 passengers per train. Each train also has 20 designated spaces for wheelchairs and four spaces reserved for bikes on trains. This is a design feature which has proven very popular with customers since we have allowed the carriage of bikes on trains in recent times.

The member also asked me when the technology transfer platform train prototypes are expected to be in Torbanlea. They are both expected to be in Torbanlea in the first half of the 2026 calendar year.

**Mr McDONALD:** Will those technology transfer trains be used for passenger service down the track?

**Ms Stannard:** I think that is correct, but there are 65 trains being built in addition to those two trains, so they are not part of the 65.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have a question in relation to the cross-border commissioner. Minister, will there be complementary legislation to give the commissioner what some local governments are calling 'teeth'—effectively, an authority under legislation to act?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. Certainly, as we have talked about already tonight, the position is very important. We want to make sure that we follow the guidelines. We will be looking at other commissioners—what their roles are and what ability they have. We certainly do not want to be worse off than any of the other commissioners. Certainly, we could even come to a point where we look at making some changes to make that position permanent, without changes of government interrupting that position. It is still early days. We are still working through the process, as we said before, of getting the commissioner and the position worked out.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you.

**Mr KATTER:** Minister, biofuels and more specifically SAF are receiving support from the government. The Dalby ethanol plant remains shut. Given that the viability of such plants relies on support such as an ethanol mandate, which we have in this state, but no fines have been issued on the mandate since its existence, can you confirm if you have had any discussion with your counterparts in other departments in order to try to stimulate that industry with no cost to the government through the enforcement of that mandate?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I can say that I have not had any conversations with other ministers in relation to the methanol mandate. I know of the importance of this sector for you. I think we talked about this at estimates last year. The Queensland government did support the ethanol mandate; it was implemented by the Queensland government. I am more than happy to continue talking offline in relation to the support you are looking for from other agencies in government regarding your question.

**Mr KATTER:** The next question is similar in principle. The phosphate fertiliser plant in North-West Queensland has been battling extraordinarily high gas input costs since we opened up the market to the global parity price without a gas reserve policy and despite many calls from industry for some protection like Western Australia has. I would say this is a vital piece of manufacturing given the output of that fertiliser and its national significance. Again, has there been any discussion about addressing that gas supply price issue?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. As we have been talking about tonight, I certainly support the manufacturing industry moving forward, whether it be fertiliser or that type of product. We certainly know of and acknowledge the cost of energy for businesses. We are trying to do everything we possibly can to keep those prices down. To be honest with you, I have not had any conversations about gas prices for fertiliser companies, particularly the one you are talking about. I do know that the government as a whole is always trying to do everything we possibly can to bring down the cost of energy. That is not just gas but includes other costs of energy that place businesses under cost pressure. That is why we introduced the Energy and Jobs Plan: to try to drive down the price of energy here in Queensland. I will continue to work with the member in relation to that specific business you are talking about and a way forward to start having some serious conversations around the added costs through the gas prices you are talking about.

**Mr KATTER:** Has the department been active in assisting the Mossman mill, particularly with the possibility of conversion to biofuels and SAF production? When converting that mill has the department been engaged in any way to try to help save that valuable piece of manufacturing in the far north?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I have some information on the Mossman mill for you. I am not sure if it is what you want to hear, but I will give it a crack. Earlier this year, as you know, the Miles government invested \$12.1 million for the Mossman community in that transition

program moving forward to support those local mill workers. I know the member is all over that. The program responds to the Mossman mill being placed into liquidation, which is always concerning. I understand that the immediate actions under the program were undertaken including an initial information session to assist those workers, the formation of the Mossman Region Stakeholder Advisory Committee and the commencement of a regional transition opportunity study moving forward.

The Miles Labor government will always go in to bat for our regional communities, as you know, that need support, and this program is one of many that demonstrate that we are on the ground ready to help. I am sure the Premier has had conversations with the member in relation to opportunities moving forward.

As the Mossman Region Transition Program falls within the portfolio of state development and infrastructure, Minister Grace will be able to provide further details on the progress of the program. I do not know if the DG wants to mention anything, but we can certainly get in contact with whomever you had discussions with in relation to the manufacturing side of the mill or whichever part you are talking about to see what we can do to assist in terms of that program and the mill support.

**Mr ANDREW:** Minister, with reference to page 2 of the SDS and the key deliverable of promoting industrial growth, will the minister advise what the government is doing to support industrial growth in the regions, particularly those around Mackay and Central Queensland?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. As the member knows, I am a huge advocate for regional communities and industrial growth—I live in one of the biggest industrial cities in Australia in Gladstone—which can be seen in the support we are continuing to give to those industries moving forward particularly, as I have just mentioned, the Energy and Jobs Plan. We know that a lot of those large industries are looking for that support and part of the plan lets us do the work they are looking for. That is to decarbonise a lot of them and also support new aspects like water that these industries are going to need. That is why we delivered nearly a billion dollars on the Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline to help make sure that not only can industry continue but new industries can be created moving forward. Particularly in the Mackay region, which as you know is also an industrial powerhouse, we are supporting things like the resources centre that they have set up there. I know you are a big supporter of that industry.

At the same time as developing and supporting industries in regional Queensland we are also looking after our communities. Our Building Our Regions grants program is supporting councils which can help them support their communities to attract industrial businesses to the region. As far as my portfolios go, we will always support those regional communities, particularly with industrial support and particularly large manufacturing support for those areas.

**Mr ANDREW:** Minister, I talked earlier with the other minister in the previous session about renewables projects and being able to support and prop up councils like Livingstone Shire Council. They have 1,200 people in Marlborough now. They have also had a lot of their property taken away due to the federal government and the Army in the Shoalwater Bay exercise area. Would the government look at getting these renewables projects or the people who are actually buying into them to support these councils? Do you think you could look at trying to work with them to bolster those smaller councils that are on the verge of being in bad situations financially?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. Obviously in my portfolio of regional development we will always look after our regional communities, particularly our councils. That is why we invested money into Building Our Regions, which allows councils to invest in the infrastructure they need not only to do the water and wastewater projects but also to help them with new developments which will allow people to move into those communities. What we are also doing in my portfolios in relation to those communities in and around Livingstone, Rockhampton and those areas on the fringe of your electorate are things like at Mount Morgan and our support of a pipeline to give that community water for the first time ever.

**Mr ANDREW:** It is well received. Thank you, Minister.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Thank you for your support for that project. That is making sure that our communities grow with the industries that are coming. The pressures are certainly there with the extended growth into Queensland. The numbers of people moving to Queensland, as you would know, are continuing to grow. Part of my portfolio is about making sure that that infrastructure is supported. We will continue to do that right throughout the regional communities, not just in your electorate.

**Mr ANDREW:** Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** We are right up against time. There are a couple of issues that we need to touch on again. One was where we started off—and I still question whether it is relevant to estimates—about whether the minister had received correspondence from Downer and any contractual requirements that require disclosure? I do not know if you have any information.


**Mr BUTCHER:** I do. TMR advised my office of a meeting and a visit request. It is no different to if someone such as Matt Canavan was interested in it or any other politician. This is a usual practice for MPs in relation to visit requests and briefings or a media request. There was nothing untoward about it. It was just that someone from TMR told me that there were members who wanted to come and visit the site in relation to the train program.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much for that.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Can I also clarify about the forum members for the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast? They are listed on the website. You can get that information there.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. That means that we do not have any questions on notice. That is good. We have reached the end of the time allocated to examine the proposed expenditure for the regional development and manufacturing portfolio areas. The committee will now adjourn for a break and will resume at 7.45 with the examination of the estimates for the portfolio area of water.

**Proceedings suspended from 7.29 pm to 7.45 pm.**

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of water open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I call the member for Nanango.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you, Mr Chair. I have a question for the CEO of Seqwater, please. Welcome to estimates. Is desalination still being considered for Queensland?

**Mr Harpham:** Thank you for the question, member. Seqwater's revised Water Security Program outlines Seqwater's overall strategy to maintain the region's long-term water security, including the need for new supply sources. Knowing that the impacts of population growth and climate change will influence the need for new supplies, Seqwater has already commenced assessments to determine the best option for the next bulk water supply. New dams are not an option as there is no new water available in the Seqwater plans without environmental impacts as it has all been fully allocated. In addition, there are no new dam sites available that would not have impacts on the environment or residents. Manufactured water is the only option for new bulk water supplies and desalination is one of those potential sources. Seqwater is investigating a new desalination plant for South-East Queensland. A business case to be completed by late 2024 will explore potential locations, capacity and timing for delivery.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** What are the current locations under consideration for desal?

**Mr Harpham:** Thank you for the question, member. The current locations in relation to the proposed new desalination plant are the subject of a detailed business case which has not yet been completed. It has not yet been put before government and the locations are commercial-in-confidence while we are developing the DBC.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Are you able to disclose how many locations the business case is looking into?

**Mr Harpham:** At present, all I can disclose is that there are numerous options being considered as part of a long list for that northern desal site.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Was Bribie Island considered as part of that initial business case investigation?

**Mr Harpham:** From what I understand, there would have been some consideration of it, but I understand that it has been ruled out by government.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** When was the CEO first notified that the Bribie Island site for desalination was ruled out?

**Mr Harpham:** Was ruled out? I am not actually aware when the CEO of the day was notified of that. I have been the interim CEO for four months since April, but we could try to find that information.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you. Given that you have the business case and you are aware of the current business case, how much work was done before the government made the decision to discount Bribie Island after pressure from the opposition?

**Mr SMITH:** Point of order, Chair: the imputation at the end. I also ask your guidance, Chair: is the member straying into asking a policy question of the chief executive?

**Mr McDONALD:** Frivolous point of order.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for your point of order, member for Bundaberg. I do not think that meets the criteria for a point of order, except the issue of policy. We are straying into policy and it may be that some of these questions could be better directed to the minister. The officer may want to finish his answer and then you may want to ask the minister some questions.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I am happy to move on.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Can I add to that?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I am happy to move on.

**CHAIR:** We can come back to that.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** You have your own questions you can answer, Minister. I have another question to the CEO of Seqwater. In the last financial year, could the acting CEO please outline the money that has been spent on consultants?

**Mr Harpham:** Thank you for the question, member. Seqwater engages consultants and professional services to support key areas where external expertise is effective, prudent and efficient. We use a combination of in-house, whole-of-government or local buy panels where appropriate and all engagements, panel evaluations and competitive procurement processes are based on value for money and management of risk. Seqwater's expenditure across consultancy, professional services and contractor support, in 2023-24, was \$30.8 million. The use of professional services and contractor support is part of our flexible resourcing model. The year-on-year increase of \$3.6 million has been fully funded from budgeted vacant positions.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** In relation to the proposed desalination plant, when was Seqwater advised to stop the work on the Bribie Island section of the business case?

**Mr Harpham:** I actually do not have the date that that occurred or whether we were informed or advised to do so. I can endeavour to get that information to you by the end of the session.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have a question for the minister. Minister, when were you first made aware that Bribie Island was being proposed as a location for a desalination facility?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. The decision on Bribie Island was made at the end of the last year, solely on the basis that work had already been done previously in relation to a desalination plant on Bribie Island and it was ruled out back then. The decision that the government made in relation to a new desalination plant was in the northern part of the South East Queensland Water Grid. When you are building these large-scale infrastructure projects, you want to be close to the grid and you want to be able to facilitate the water for the northern part of the grid. During the South-East Queensland water plan update, we have supported the upgrade of the desalination plant at Tugun and we also made an announcement that the shorter term goal is to connect Wyaralong Dam to the South East Queensland Water Grid. It only made sense to do a desalination plant, which we are talking about tonight, in the northern part of the grid. The Sunshine Coast area is the most obvious choice, not Bribie Island, solely because of the distance to the grid and the environmental issues that were encountered when it was previously looked at by past governments.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, you were doing a press conference with the former premier, which I am sure you remember, when either you or the then premier—and I should recall it—said, 'It could be one of many locations.' What are those locations that you are looking into, Minister? Is it Kawana?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. As the interim CEO has said in relation to the desalination plant, the detailed business case is still ongoing and they are looking at different sites in the Sunshine Coast area. As I said, we want to choose a location that is close to the water grid, that is close to where the suction of the saltwater will come from. There are a few locations around the coast that Seqwater will be looking at as part of that detailed business case.



As soon as that is finished, I am more than happy to release that to not only the communities where the site is being selected but to you personally, if you would like me to let you know firsthand. This is important for the South East Queensland Water Grid. We are blessed that there is around 81 per cent of water in our South-East Queensland dams at the moment. The need, as we have identified, into the future will mean we will need manufactured water, which is what a desalination plant on the northern part of the Sunshine Coast will do.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, are you going to rule out a desalination plant in the state seat of Caloundra?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I am not in a position to rule anything out because I am not doing the detailed business case. As I said, areas of the northern Sunshine Coast are certainly being looked at. The detailed business case will identify the best location—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Which sites on the Sunshine Coast are you looking at? The Sunshine Coast is a very large area.

**Mr BUTCHER:** That is a hypothetical. I do not know. Seqwater is doing a detailed business case. The former premier, as you know, ruled out Bribie Island.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** You were not happy with that, were you, Minister?

**Mr BUTCHER:** The northern part of the Sunshine Coast is where they are looking at doing the desalination plant and they are doing the detailed business case on the best locations for that facility.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I will direct a question to the Acting CEO of Seqwater. Which sites on the Sunshine Coast are being identified for the business case, for the desalination plant?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Chair, that is a repetition of the question.

**CHAIR:** That is the third time that you have asked that.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I will rephrase my question to the Acting CEO of Seqwater. When will the communities that are affected by the proposed desalination plant on the Sunshine Coast be consulted—before or after the end of the business case?

**Mr Harpham:** I thank you for the question, member. We have an obligation to supply that detailed business case to government by the end of this year. It will be a government decision as to engagement moving forward, once they have had the opportunity to consider that DBC.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** If I can clarify, have those communities on the northern Sunshine Coast been consulted about a proposal for a desalination plant?

**Mr Harpham:** The communities in question by way of broader community engagement, no, but there has been some consultation with distributor-retailers and councils in the northern region.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, in reference to the Capital Statement at page 84, there is more than \$35 million in funding for an investigation of that new desalination plant in South-East Queensland. How can you not notify the people of the northern Sunshine Coast—you have defined it as the northern Sunshine Coast. Where is the start and the end of the northern Sunshine Coast for you—what suburbs?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. Once again, I am not picking the site for a desalination plant.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I am asking you to identify what is 'northern'.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I have also acknowledged that the site that will be selected will be the best site to hook into the South East Queensland Water Grid.

**Mr HART:** Unless politics gets in the way.

**Mr BUTCHER:** There are numerous locations in the northern part of the Sunshine Coast—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** So Noosa?

**Mr BUTCHER:** The northern part of the Sunshine Coast.

**CHAIR:** Member!

**Mr SMITH:** A nuclear power plant in Nanango?

**CHAIR:** Do not go there. Minister, keep answering the question.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I do not quite understand what that member is on. It is about the water estimates in the state.

**CHAIR:** Order, members! Minister?

**Mr BUTCHER:** For the member's knowledge, if you look at the South-East Queensland Water Grid and the northern part, particularly with the growth on the Sunshine Coast, as I talked about earlier, and the growth in the Caboolture area, where the grid currently sits, the site that will be chosen for a desalination plant in Queensland in the future will be a position that is closest to the water grid and close to the ocean, where the extraction comes from. Having it close to the water grid will give us an opportunity to bring the costs of this down because we are not having to transport water hundreds of kilometres.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have another question for the interim CEO of Seqwater. In your previous answer—I think I heard it correctly—you said that Seqwater had spent \$30.8 million on contractors. I think that is what you said—contractors. My question was actually about consultants, or are they one and the same?

**Mr Harpham:** Thank you for the question, member. For clarity, consultancy is advice on what work we should be doing. Seqwater's total consultancy expenditure out of that \$30.8 million was \$4.8 million.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** So the contractors were works, as in mowing at the dams and so forth?

**Mr Harpham:** Professional services, being providing the services to do the work, was \$19.7 million.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you. I have a question for the director-general. I refer to SDS page 1 and the department's objective to lead water resource management. I note that four water plans have been postponed by the department: Pioneer Valley has been postponed until 30 September 2025; the Burnett Basin, until 19 April 2027; the Fitzroy Basin, until 30 August 2025; and the Burdekin Basin, until 1 September 2026. Why is this the case?

**Ms Dobe:** I thank the member for the question. The department has numerous water plans open at the moment. We make a judgement on which water plans to review and which ones to postpone, based on the issues that are being raised with us about those water plans and the risk to the resource. We have 23 water plans right across the state, and the water plans are in effect for 10 years but can be extended.

There is regular monitoring and reporting to determine that the plan is meeting its objectives and outcomes. They are periodically reviewed and replaced using an adaptive management approach to improve resource management over time. We currently have nine water plans under active review, and they will be replaced progressively over the next three years. These are the Burdekin, Pioneer, Fitzroy, Logan, Gold Coast, Moreton, Gulf, Burnett, and Georgina and Diamantina plans. The new water plan for the Mary Basin was released in May this year. We also released assessment reports, which are the scientific reports monitoring the progress of the plans, for the Baffle, Condamine, Balonne, Border Rivers, Moonie, Mitchell, Cape York, Wet Tropics and Gulf water plans this year.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** With respect, my question was specific to those four water plans and why they had been delayed.

**Ms Dobe:** We make decisions about which plans to review based on the issues that are raised by the community as well as the impact of the resource.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you. I refer to the Flinders unallocated water release. The preliminary transfer for unallocated water in the Flinders River catchment started two years ago, on 30 June 2022, followed by the part B competitive tender on 16 January 2023. The department's own website states that this process began in response to a—

... high level of demand for water in the Flinders River Catchment area we have released 110,000ML of general reserve.

Minister, would you explain why the current status on the website—and it is in bold—clearly says—

On 14 March 2024, the department decided to not progress any tenders or make offers to enter a Call Option Deed under the Terms of Sale.

How many tenders were received and, given the cost of submitting a tender application, will those who tendered be offered compensation?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. There are quite a few parts to that question which I will answer and then refer some to the director-general.

The water tender process is an operational matter for the department and decisions are made by the delegate of the chief executive and not by the minister. I am not responsible for that. I understand that on 14 March the chief executive of the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and

Water decided not to progress tenders or make any offers under the Flinders unallocated water release. I understand that this decision was made in light of the performance assessment report relating to the water plan in the Gulf dated 2007 and the decision to bring forward the review of that water plan.

The water demands are increasing, as the member noted, and the water grant needs to achieve a balance between the social, economic and ecological outcomes of that water plan. The new plan will revisit how the share of water is balanced among all water interests in the region, and it is intended that better defined water products, water reserves and trading markets will support economic development in the region.

The department has been conducting public consultation and seeking submissions on the draft plan, and participants in the tender process were strongly encouraged to put in a submission. I understand that the department has also been working closely with those in the water tender process, as the member has asked, and this includes reimbursing participants for reasonable costs incurred as part of that process. I will hand over to the director-general if she wants to add any more to that.

**Ms Dobe:** I think you have covered most of it.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Specifically, what was the reason to give two years of false hope to the people in the market and industry, both agricultural and mining and resources? There were many, many media releases by the government. I sat in the parliament, as did my colleagues, and heard about this, and then you just ripped it out by putting a notice on the department website, Minister.

**CHAIR:** There were some inferences in there, but feel free—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** My question was why.

**CHAIR:** Hang on, I am finishing.

**Mr BUTCHER:** You started by asking the director-general. Is it to the director-general or to me?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Whichever.

**CHAIR:** Feel to answer that in a broad sense, if you like.

**Ms Dobe:** I thank the member for the question. The Flinders water release did commence the process for a period of time. We did the performance assessment report on the water plan during that period of time. That gives us information about the science—how the river is performing under that plan—and also looks at the demands across the catchment for that water. A decision was made that the review of the Gulf water plan needed to be brought forward and undertaken so we could consider how we might be able to meet all of the future demands.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** So it just stopped? Thank you. I would like to ask a question in relation to the Mary Basin water plan, which has been finalised this year. This question is to the director-general and relates to the proposed pumped hydro scheme at Borumba Dam. Given the Mary Basin water plan has just been finalised, will the director-general clarify whether the water requirements for the proposed Borumba Dam pumped hydro scheme have been factored into that plan?

**Ms Dobe:** I thank the member for the question. The Mary water plan was finalised in May 2024. This new water plan replaces the previous plan. The Borumba Pumped Hydro Project must align with the new Mary water plan outcomes, objectives and strategies. This project and other water related matters were fully considered as part of the review of the water plan.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** My question is to the minister. Will future urban requirements of Gympie and surrounds be included as part of the storage capacity of the new dam at Borumba?

**Mr BUTCHER:** My understanding is that, yes, it will. During the process of the plan, the council have been extremely forthright on the water they were looking for out of the water plan upgrade. I am pretty confident that we delivered what the council asked for in terms of water to support their urban communities.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Once Borumba is trying to be filled, council have indicated major concerns around security of their urban water supply. How is the minister reassuring that community and those in the Mary Valley that, should this go ahead, they will not be without water for agricultural, industry and urban uses?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Part of this plan is that no irrigators will be worse off as a result of either the water plan or the pumped hydro. I will pass onto the director-general who has more information on the council's allocation that they asked for.

**Ms Dobe:** The way that the first fill works is that the requirements of the existing customers who hold water in that dam—whether they are urban or irrigators—and the environmental objectives as well all need to be met during those first-fill requirements. It might be that it takes a number of times, a number of rain events, for the dam to meet all of those requirements and fill.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Director-General, during the fill stage, who will be determining the priority between the production of electricity, agricultural production, industry and urban?

**Ms Dobe:** As I just said, during the requirements for the first-fill stage, they need to meet the existing customers' needs and the needs of the environmental outcomes that exist in the water plan.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have a follow-up question for the acting CEO of Seqwater. I note in one of your first answers you said that there would be no more dams or we could not have new dams in South-East Queensland. Is that a direction of government or is that a policy of Seqwater?

**Mr Harpham:** That is neither. Thank you for the question, member. That is just a statement of what is available in the water plans at the moment. We do not have allocation that could support dams. That is my understanding of the water plans in South-East Queensland.

**Mr HART:** Allocation from where—out of the sky?

**CHAIR:** Is that a question or a comment?

**Mr HART:** It is a question.

**CHAIR:** What was the question, member for Burleigh?

**Mr HART:** The question is where is the allocation that you are talking about? Is it coming out of the sky to fill up a dam? Is that what you are talking about?

**CHAIR:** Ignore the inferences there.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I can answer that.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** The question is not to you, Minister.

**Mr BUTCHER:** It was a statement, not a question. Of course dams fill up with rainwater, member. When you look at the water plan, you need to protect the irrigators that have water and the communities that have water. The plans for South-East Queensland do not have the capacity in the water plans for that extra water to build a large-scale dam in South-East Queensland. Even if there was water in the water plan, I ask members on the other side of the table who are from South-East Queensland which communities would be inundated? Which agricultural areas would be inundated with the building of a large-scale dam in South-East Queensland? The water plans are there for a reason: to make sure that current irrigators and current communities have water for the future. It is not about putting a large-scale dam somewhere that does not have water in a water plan to facilitate it. It is very simple.

**Mr HART:** It doesn't make sense.

**Mr BUTCHER:** If you have any suggestions on where you would want to put a dam here in South-East Queensland, member for Burleigh—

**Mr HART:** I am not the expert; these people are.

**Mr BUTCHER:**—or the costs associated with it, please tell me because I would really like to know.

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, do you have another question?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Yes, I do. I have a question in relation to the Haughton pipeline. This question is to the minister. It has been revealed by whistleblowers from Townsville City Council that there will be a cost blowout, taking the Haughton pipeline project to more than \$420 million. Have there been any instructions from the state that have led to the change of scope and hence the hefty price increase?

**CHAIR:** I do have an issue with verification. You started by saying 'a whistleblower said' and you quoted a figure. It really is difficult for the minister to answer this fully without some verification of these figures that have just been floated out.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Point of order, Chair: very rightfully we have whistleblower protection and legislation in this great state of ours. I would hate to think the day comes that a Labor government decides that whistleblowers should be outed so they can be attacked by members of parliament like we have seen in Rockhampton. Let's just protect our whistleblowers.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I am happy to answer the question.

**CHAIR:** I remind the member that you have already revealed which organisation this person works for. Be that as it may, I am flagging there is an issue with verification if you cannot produce the documents. I will give some latitude to the answer, Minister.

**Mr BUTCHER:** For a start, this is a Townsville council project. The Miles government is working very closely with the Townsville council to progress the Haughton pipeline. We know how critical this water security project is. The Miles government has \$195 million on the table for stage 2 through the Department of State Development and Infrastructure. This is on top of the \$215 million that has been delivered to the council for stage 1 of that project. When it comes to planning and delivering the water infrastructure project, we will deliver, as we have done in the past, as you know. We fund councils, unlike those opposite, who just cut from councils. Questions about this project—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Point of order, Chair: my question clearly was had there been any instructions from the state that have led to a change of scope in the project?

**Mr BUTCHER:** No.

**CHAIR:** I understand that the minister was giving his answer.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Once again, the answer to that is no, member. This is a Townsville City Council project which is being supported financially by the Queensland government and we will continue to do that. In relation to the conversations that we have had as part of the regional community cabinet in Townsville recently, I did meet with members of the water team from the Townsville City Council and had conversations with them about their way forward. Some of the ways forward that they talked about was reviewing the project which the Townsville City Council are currently doing to try to bring this in as part of the funding package that we have delivered for that council.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister—

**CHAIR:** We have gone well over time. You have had a very large block. We will go to some questions from government members.

**Mr BROWN:** With reference to page 84 of Budget Paper No. 3, will the minister provide an update on Seqwater's plan to continue to deliver safe and secure drinking water for South-East Queensland?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. The Miles government is getting on with the job of delivering safe and secure water supply for the south-east while planning the region's future needs as well. We are doing this through our own government owned corporation Seqwater.

I was out at Mount Crosby recently to open the new vehicle bridge. A lot of work goes into dam operations and delivering water security that does not always get recognised. I want to acknowledge the hard work of the Seqwater team in delivering that project for both of those communities.

The new bridge is part of a package of works to improve flood resilience at Mount Crosby. This includes upgrade to the East Bank Pump Station and a new electrical substation—works that support the Mount Crosby water treatment plant, which is also vital in delivering safe drinking water to South-East Queensland. The Mount Crosby precinct is one important part of the South-East Queensland water grid.

Of course, the grid itself was a Queensland Labor initiative. There are 12 dam storages, 36 treatment plants, 600 kilometres of pipeline, the Gold Coast Desalination Plant and the Western Corridor Recycled Water Scheme for drought response. The grid is an important network of water assets. It is meeting our current needs and will meet our needs into the immediate future, but with population growth and climate change we need to invest in new grid assets to meet the long-term need for water in South-East Queensland. That is why we are committed to new water infrastructure, as announced last October, with a new Water Security Program.

Seqwater's total capital expenditure plan for 2024-25 is \$421.2 million, with \$342 million of that allocated to improving water security and system reliability. This includes investigations into new water infrastructure such as expansions on the Gold Coast Desalination Plant and a new water treatment plant and connection to the grid of Wyaralong Dam, both key items in our Water Security Program. The 2024-25 budget also includes funding for important water security projects like progressing the Toowoomba to Warwick pipeline and dam upgrades at Lake Macdonald, Somerset, Wivenhoe and North Pine dams, which are all key water security storages.

The Miles government is doing what matters for Queensland. We will continue to deliver the water infrastructure needed for South-East Queensland's growing population. Enhancing our existing assets and investing in new assets is all part of long-term water security for South-East Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Minister, referring to page 4 of the SDS, can you advise the committee how the Queensland government is supporting the health of the Great Artesian Basin?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I know that he is very passionate about it. The Miles Labor government has been very clear that protecting the Great Artesian Basin is an important priority. In May the Premier announced a ban on carbon capture and storage in the Queensland part of the GAB, and I am proud to be part of a government that made this very important decision. This means that greenhouse gas storage activities, including carbon capture and storage projects, will be permanently banned in the Great Artesian Basin in Queensland. This is further proof of our commitment to protect this valuable resource.

This policy is nation-leading. That is right: the Miles Labor government is leading the nation in taking strong action to protect this vital water asset for Queenslanders now and into the future. The Great Artesian Basin is the largest groundwater aquifer in the world and supports around 80 communities in Outback Queensland. The Great Artesian Basin is essential to our regional communities, the environment, the agriculture sector and industry more broadly. The Great Artesian Basin supports more than 200 natural spring ecosystems, many of which provide a home to rare and endangered flora and fauna.

In addition to the ban, the recent state budget allocates a further \$32 million to continue important capping and piping works in the Great Artesian Basin. The Australian government allocated \$32 million in their budget as well, and I have made it quite clear to the federal minister that Queensland expects most of that funding as we hold the largest part of the Great Artesian Basin in Queensland. These new capping and piping activities will build on the existing \$89 million we have already invested to protect the Great Artesian Basin. This program has been incredibly successful, leveraging further funding from landholders, industry and the Australian government. The additional funding in the state budget supports the implementation of the Great Artesian Basin and other regional aquifer water plans, which requires all artesian stock and domestic bores to have watertight delivery systems by 2032.

Since the work began, 770 bores have been rehabilitated and 415 drains piped. Around 15,000 kilometres of open drains have been decommissioned, which is fantastic. Importantly, this work has saved more than 226,000 megalitres of water. Groundwater pressure is increasing in the GAB thanks to this capping and piping work. Unlike the LNP, which gave millions to a mining company to experiment with CCS in the Great Artesian Basin, Labor has taken strong action to protect this resource and continue to invest in it so it can sustain regional communities for generations to come.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, can you please advise the committee how the Queensland government is supporting regional councils with important water security projects and how this is reducing cost-of-living pressures?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. The Miles government is investing in water infrastructure to support our councils right across the state. When councils need us, we roll up our sleeves and we deliver for them. I have reiterated to the department and councils how important it is that we all work together to ensure our communities have the infrastructure they need to deliver safe drinking water. We have committed more than \$6.6 billion in water infrastructure. This includes \$69 million for 99 projects across 50 local government areas under round 6 of the Building our Regions program.

I have met with many mayors who tell me the same thing: the funding that we provide helps their bottom line and helps them limit rate increases to their communities. This includes projects like the Mount Morgan pipeline. Thanks to \$40.4 million from the Miles government, the community of Mount Morgan will have a permanent and secure water supply into the future. The Premier and I also recently announced an increase in funding for the Cairns Water Security Stage 1 Project to \$195 million. This project will strengthen Cairns' future water supply. It includes a new intake at the Mulgrave River, a new water treatment plant and water reservoirs at Gordonvale, with supporting infrastructure to connect the new intake to the existing water network. It is projects like these that are putting downward pressure on water bills and helping our local councils with their own bottom lines.

We are also helping councils plan for the future through our \$2.6 million Urban Water Risk Assessment Project. The outcomes of this assessment will help councils and Queensland government agencies plan for the future, make informed decisions and identify areas of greatest need. We have also secured funding from the federal government for five regional Queensland communities for projects under the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program. These projects will bolster water security for these communities. This includes \$5 million from the Australian government for the second intake for Douglas Shire Council, matched by \$5 million from the Miles Labor government. This

Queensland government is contributing \$20 million towards these five projects. One thing is for sure: the Miles Labor government continues to deliver for our councils and regional communities. We deliver the funding needed and we provide the support needed to ensure we have drinking water right across the state.

**Mr BROWN:** With reference to page 1 of the SDS, will the minister update the committee on how the Queensland government is supporting South-East Queensland water users with the cost-of-living?

**Mr BUTCHER:** The Miles government is listening to Queenslanders and delivering significant cost-of-living relief right across the board. In the water portfolio we are keeping bulk water prices down in South-East Queensland and delivering important cost-of-living relief. Bulk water prices remain low, with historically low increases of 2.17 per cent this year—well below inflation. That is roughly 23 cents a week for the typical household in South-East Queensland. When the LNP was in power this averaged 12 per cent per year between 2012 and 2015.

The bulk water charge is there to recover the cost of building, operating and developing the SEQ Water Grid, which is a big network, as I have discussed tonight already. We are keeping bulk water costs low while ensuring we continue to invest in the SEQ Water Grid so we can cater for the region's growing population and those climate challenges that we know are coming. South-East Queensland bulk water prices are reviewed by the Queensland Competition Authority, the state's independent economic regulator. They advise government on prudent and efficient bulk water supply costs. It is important to remember that bulk water charges make up one-third of the typical household bill, with the remainder comprised of costs from council owned distributor-retailers. While the state does not set these costs, I wrote to all of the retailers in South-East Queensland early this year asking that they be mindful of cost-of-living pressures and limit any pricing increases.

We are also rolling out our concealed leaks policy, with households benefiting right now. Like I said at estimates last year, I thank everyone, including fellow members and even opposition members, for writing to me and talking to me about this important issue with their communities. In response we acted, and we now have in place the South East Queensland Concealed Leak Remission Scheme. This scheme provides financial relief to people facing large water bills due to a concealed leak. It is delivered by water retailers through their billing arrangements.

In its first year of operation, the scheme has delivered \$2.8 million in relief for over 4,700 customers, including 700 South-East Queensland pensioners who feel it the most. We are also helping pensioners with our \$120 South-East Queensland pensioner water rebate. I met with some Caloundra pensioners earlier this year, and I know this is another important cost-of-living measure for them because every bit helps when it comes to your household bills. This financial year we have \$20.5 million going out to South-East Queensland pensioners through this important measure. Queenslanders can always count on a Miles Labor government to tackle the cost-of-living pressures, particularly with water.

**Mr SMITH:** I know that the member for Rockhampton would be awake right now watching estimates so I thought it was best that I ask this question. Minister, can you please update the committee on the benefits to Central Queensland of the recently completed Rookwood Weir and the next steps for this project?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I am sure the member for Rockhampton is up watching this debate tonight. The Miles government is continuing to deliver the water infrastructure our state needs, and Rookwood Weir highlights what we are about as a government. Water infrastructure delivered under our watch is delivering water security, jobs and economic opportunities for Central Queensland. On the topic of jobs, Rookwood Weir will create hundreds of new agricultural jobs in Central Queensland. There is of course the macadamias and the other intensive horticultural projects, as well as the hydrogen and other industrial opportunities thanks to the enhanced water security that Rookwood Weir delivers for Central Queensland.

We are talking about the largest weir that has been built since World War II—the largest in Queensland. It spans over 300 metres across the Fitzroy River. The weir has unlocked 86,000 megalitres of new water allocations. Over half this volume will supply irrigation customers to support the transition to high-value agriculture in the Central Queensland region.

Sunwater is working with customers to deliver the first water from the weir in the coming weeks. One of the water customers which will benefit from the project is Rural Funds Management. The water from the weir is enabling them to plant 800,000 macadamia trees over 2,500 hectares near Rockhampton. We reached practical completion in November last year and the weir received its first inflows and began to spill for the very first time in December, demonstrating the reliability of the Fitzroy River system.

Construction saw 130,000 cubic metres being poured and 800,000 cubic metres of earthworks. The project supported 350 jobs at peak construction, with over 130 of those sourced locally. More than 30 apprentices and trainees have worked on the weir since construction started. Everyone knows how passionate I am as a fitter and turner by trade to have those apprenticeships.

Completion of the Rookwood Weir has also enabled work on the almost \$1 billion Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline. This pipeline is now 50 per cent complete. With the \$311 million investment allocated in this year's budget, it is supporting 400 direct jobs during construction, with more than 25 apprentices working on that project. The Gladstone Area Water Board, which is delivering the project, have engaged with 111 Central Queensland businesses, with \$89.3 million spent locally generating more good jobs in the region. When completed, the pipeline will deliver long-term water security for Gladstone residents and industry and support emerging industries such as hydrogen. I look forward to seeing the first water flowing in coming weeks. The future is bright for Central Queensland thanks to a Miles Labor government investing in Rookwood Weir.

**CHAIR:** We will now go to opposition questions with a 20-minute block.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, I refer to the Capital Statement and funding for the new Paradise Dam wall. In January the minister announced that Sunwater is now progressing a detailed business case for an entirely new Paradise Dam wall. Five years on from the news that the wall had to be lowered, would you agree now that this is the greatest public infrastructure fail in Australia's history?

**CHAIR:** Member, you were doing really well up to that point. Clearly there were some argumentative parts in that question. Minister, you can ignore that and feel free to answer the question that was embedded in that.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. As the member knows, the Miles Labor government is committed to restoring the full water supply delivered by the original dam and delivering a safe lifelong asset for that community. We want an asset that will reliably serve that community for at least 100 years, underpinning jobs and growth for the region for generations.

This is a very complex engineering project. In fact dam experts believe this was one of the most complex dam projects in the world, but we are getting on with the job of delivering a new dam wall. That is what the experts and Sunwater have recommended and we have listened. The member for Nanango said the wall could be fixed for \$25 million—a number plucked out of thin air. Unlike the LNP, who are reckless when it comes to safety, we will always prioritise dam safety here in Queensland. That is why we spent \$100 million on the essential works to make the dam safe in the first place. That is four times more on safety works alone than the LNP said they would spend on the entire project. There is \$109.6 million in the 2024-25 budget to continue important planning and those early works for the new dam wall as part of the \$1.2 billion that is being committed by this government and the federal government.

Sunwater knows my clear expectations that this project is done properly and that we progress it in a timely and efficient manner. That is why the DBC for the new dam wall is now underway. The DBC to upgrade and expand the irrigation network around the dam is underway. Sunwater has appointed CPB Contractors and Georgiou Group as preferred construction partners, and critical enabling works are progressing, including road upgrades and geotech works as part of the building of the new wall.

We acted quickly when the new concrete issues were confirmed and Sunwater continues to keep the community, the Paradise reference group and key grower groups updated as the project progresses. Final timelines and costings will be confirmed following completion of the detailed business case.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, when did you first learn that Sunwater would be walking away from the idea to rebuild the current wall and would construct a new wall downstream?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I was made aware by Sunwater in October in relation to the issues that had arisen through Paradise Dam. To clarify your question, Sunwater is not walking away from anything. The expectations that I had as part of the planning processes going on was to identify every opportunity that we would rebuild back on top of Paradise Dam with the existing infrastructure that was there. We wanted to make the community downstream of Bundaberg safe for the next 100 years.

I was made aware of the issue in October last year. Following a rigorous testing program, Sunwater advised of three unexpected new issues in relation to the long-term strength and quality of the dam's concrete. The advice from experts on the issues confirmed the existing wall could not be



repaired at that time. The relevant reports from experts and fact sheets and videos from Sunwater are all online if you would like to look at those. We have nothing to hide. I actually want to thank the community for understanding the complexity of this project.

As I have said in response to a question on notice from the member for Nanango, Sunwater advised of the new issues comprising the long-term strength and quality of the dam's concrete. We considered this advice and we listened to advice from the experts, as we always do. That is why we endorsed Sunwater's recommendation that the new dam wall be built immediately downstream of the old wall.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have a question to the CEO of Sunwater. Mr Stockton, I refer to the issue of multiyear volumetric account statements that are provided by Sunwater. Could the CEO advise of the current timeframes for issuing these multiyear volumetric account statements to those account holders and whether there has been a delay in issuing those statements?

**Mr Stockton:** Thank you for the question. I do not have that information to hand, but I am happy to consider it and, with the minister's permission, come back to you.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I would like that to be brought back, thank you.

**Mr Stockton:** We will get back to you.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you very much, Mr Stockton. I have questions in relation to the Somerset Dam Improvement Program, and I think those would be best referred to the interim CEO of Seqwater. In 2016, over eight years ago, the flood operation procedures for Somerset were modified and drinking water levels of both the Somerset and Wivenhoe dams were lowered to maintain flood mitigation benefits. Somerset was lowered to an 80 per cent capacity and Wivenhoe to 90 per cent. Just last week, the community finally received information about that at community information sessions and early and enabling works, and I do thank the interim CEO of meeting with me as the local member and informing me about that. When will the detailed business case be released for the Somerset Dam Improvement Program?

**Mr Harpham:** Somerset Dam is one of several dams identified for upgrade as part of our Dam Improvement Program that is required to be completed by 1 October 2035. A detailed business case is currently being prepared for Somerset Dam Improvement Project. Seqwater has undertaken extensive investigations and assessments to inform the design of the upgrade option that will be presented in the business case, such as geotech investigations, hydrological modelling and hydraulic modelling of the spillway and dissipater basin. The dam is being upgraded to meet current design standards and regulatory requirements, and we are targeting a detailed business case arriving to government mid-2025.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Obviously depending on government, when would you expect that the Somerset Dam Improvement Project will actually start?

**Mr Harpham:** Thank you for the question, member. I can advise that, during the development of the DBC, Seqwater has identified a range of opportunities to undertake early and enabling works to deliver benefits ahead of the main dam improvement project. The early and enabling works are occurring on site, with preliminary activities underway. The works do not limit the design options for upgrading the dam, and they are required to be completed irrespective of the option to be delivered, and the scope includes broad-scale geotech investigations, construction of a long-term temporary cofferdam, removal of existing spillway gates as these no longer form part of Seqwater's operations, replacing the sluice gates and outlets that are reaching the end of their serviceable life, relocation of the existing operations facilities, temporary and permanent access roadworks, and a range of other investigations and studies, and I can confirm that Seqwater received investment approval of \$514.9 million for the early and enabling works in late June 2024.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, I refer to the \$2 million allocated by the state to the Hughenden Irrigation Project in March. I note the federal Labor government's savage cut to all funding for this project which means it could not go ahead. Can the minister tell the committee what this \$2 million funding is for, exactly?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. As you would know, the member for Traeger has always been a huge advocate for the HIPCo Project, and, as part of the funding opportunities this year during the budget, the Queensland government provided additional funding of \$2.8 million over two years to the Hughenden Irrigation Project. This funding will allow the proponent to continue development of the project while a review of the Gulf water plan and the Regional Water Assessment

are conducted in the region. The Australian government has confirmed that its \$170 million commitment towards the construction of the project still stands and it will consider the project further once these assessments have been completed.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** To the interim CEO of Seqwater, my question is in relation to Cormorant Bay Cafe. I asked this question last year and, with respect, Mr Harpham, I appreciate you were not here, so that is why I thought I should ask it again this year. It has now been five years since Seqwater closed Cormorant Bay Cafe at Wivenhoe Dam. In 2019, Seqwater announced they would spend \$500,000 to renovate the building, and that was much welcomed by our community. These works have never occurred and the building has become decrepit. What has happened to the half-million dollars promised for that refurbishment and what are Seqwater's plans for the building?

**Mr Harpham:** Thank you for the question, member. Seqwater had previously committed funding to undertake significant and remediate action works to the deteriorating Cormorant Bay Cafe to meet current Building Code compliance and subject to a tenant being secured. Following an engineering investigation showing the extent of the repairs required and multiple unsuccessful attempts to secure a tenant over the past five years, investment in Cormorant Bay Cafe is unfortunately no longer viable. Seqwater will reinvest funding that would otherwise have been spent on the structural repairs into other improvements for the area for local community and visitor benefit.

In 2024-25, Seqwater will commence planning for a new nature-based playground for Lake Wivenhoe to replace the old infrastructure. The new nature-based playground will immerse visitors in the journey of the region's drinking water from catchment to tap, providing the perfect daytrip adventure for families. In 2024-25, Seqwater will also commence the extension of the public boat ramp at Billies Bay and undertake repairs and extension of the boat ramp at Hamon Cove to improve access for boats.

Seqwater is committed to working closely with Somerset Regional Council to explore other opportunities to reinvest in the site to enhance visitor experience and tourism. As you said, in mid-June I met with you on this subject and I also met with council representatives and provided a briefing about it. Seqwater and council have agreed that a workshop would be held at officer level regarding further options to reinvest in the site and to explore opportunities to leverage this natural asset for tourism and economic growth.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** See, it was almost a Dixer. In relation to that, I have a further question. I note that you met with the council at officer level. What are Seqwater's plans in relation to community consultation outside of council? Will there be any? As you can imagine, the people in that area will need convincing that it is a good idea not to have that cafe reopened.

**Mr Harpham:** Thank you for the question, member. Seqwater will be meeting with council in August. I am sure council will have views as to how best to engage with their community and we will take them on board.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** In relation to the Somerset Village homes—I understand there are roughly 10 Seqwater homes that are sitting still vacant—an answer I have been given is that the plan is to put perhaps staff for the improvement project in it. Has Seqwater requested funding from the government to assist the upgrade of these houses, given the housing crisis that we have in Queensland right now?

**Mr Harpham:** Thank you for the question, member. Seqwater has not requested government funding in relation to this matter. However, it is a matter for Seqwater, not government. Seqwater owns 10 houses in Somerset Dam Village which have been vacant since June 2020 while Seqwater considers the future use of the land, particularly, as you said, in relation to the dam improvement project. It is expected that about 150 jobs will be supported through the life of the project, with workforce requirements a key consideration as part of planning for a regional project of this scale. The potential temporary use of these properties for the Somerset Dam Improvement Project is being considered as part of the DBC and early and enabling works delivery, which I mentioned previously. These houses were built as workers' cottages for the construction of the dam from 1935, with Seqwater currently undertaking detailed structural assessments due to their age. These assessments, which are expected to be completed this year, will inform planned refurbishment of the houses so they meet required housing standards. By holding these properties for use as accommodation for the Somerset Dam Improvement Project, which will be a significant, multiyear project, Seqwater will minimise impacts on the local housing market, and onsite accommodation will also reduce local traffic flows and other disruptions during construction.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have a question to the minister. It flows well from the minister's answer to one of his own members' questions before about how wonderful the government was with local councils. I refer to the issue of Cressbrook Dam in the Toowoomba Regional Council area and their submission to your government minister for funding for the Cressbrook Dam Safety Improvement project. The project is estimated to cost around \$270 million and it will severely and adversely affect Toowoomba council's ability to fund other essential capital works, including the maintenance of existing assets. Given the safety improvements are mandated by the government and the huge burden the upgrades will place on that regional council, would the minister explain why no funding has been provided by the state for this very important project?

**Mr McDONALD:** Good question.

**CHAIR:** Before you start, of course it was a good question, it would have been from your brother perhaps.

**Mr BUTCHER:** You took my thunder, Chair! I thought the member for Lockyer would have asked that question on his brother's behalf.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** That is a good point, Chair. I will take that.

**Mr McDONALD:** Chair, for the record, my brother is the mayor of Toowoomba but I can assure you he had no influence on that question. He has a good local shadow member.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** He probably did, he has written to me enough times about it.

**Mr BUTCHER:** He has written to me, too! I thank the member for the question. As the member said, this is a Toowoomba Regional Council project. They have been aware since 2007 that this project is required to be done. My department has certainly been working extremely closely with the council to support them—not only with the old mayor but the new mayor—to help progress the project. We have just received the council's detailed business case in the last couple of weeks and we will consider the detailed business case through the department. We are a government that helps our councils and we do not cut like the LNP did. Who can forget the former Premier saying the council was sitting on a goldmine—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Welcome to 2024, Minister.

**Mr BUTCHER:**—and they should fork out for their own infrastructure. We are helping councils in the Darling Downs and the Southern Downs with their water infrastructure needs. This includes more than \$300 million for the Toowoomba to Warwick pipeline; \$41.8 million to the Toowoomba Regional Council to upgrade their water treatment plant and their pump station; and \$847,000 for a new reservoir at Kingsthorpe in Toowoomba. We have supported the council in the past with water infrastructure and we will wait and see what the department has to say about the detailed business case and the support for that project. As I said, I have a very good relationship with the mayor and councillors from Toowoomba and we will support them. In saying that, I have not heard from any of the local LNP members in the Toowoomba region asking for support for that project, other than the mayor.

**CHAIR:** One very brief last question, member for Nanango.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** This is to the minister and I am happy if he defers to the director-general. What area of land has been resumed for the proposed Nathan dam?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I will defer it to the director-general. If we have not got that information, we can get back to you.

**Ms Dobe:** Thank you for the question. There are a small number of potential dam sites across Queensland where land is being held. I will confirm by the end of the session if Nathan dam is one of those.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I suppose that answers my follow-up question. Is Nathan dam on the department's watchlist for dams or proposed dam sites?

**Ms Dobe:** The Nathan dam proposal is one of the projects that is being considered as part of the Central Queensland regional water assessment that has just commenced.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Just commenced, so there has been no preliminary works. Who is part of that? Are the local councils a part of that?

**Ms Dobe:** Yes. There are seven regional water assessments across the state—this is one of those. There are stakeholder committees that the council sit on, as well as other people.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** But there is not a specific Nathan dam proposal?

**CHAIR:** There will be some more information that gets back to you.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I am happy with that.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I will add quickly for the benefit of you, member, that we have kept the water allocations as part of Nathan dam. Currently the Dawson Valley water scheme is utilising that water with an extension that we gave to them a couple of years ago now.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you, I appreciate that answer. That is great.

**Mr KATTER:** Minister, the Charters Towers weir was built about 100 years ago. Is the minister or the department aware of any significant cultural negative environmental impacts from that weir?

**Mr BUTCHER:** From the old weir? Personally, I am not aware of any cultural issues. I do not know if the director-general is or not.

**Ms Dobe:** That weir was built at a time when there were completely different regulatory requirements, both environmental and cultural assessments.

**Mr KATTER:** It was a rhetorical question, I apologise. My question is then: why are we here 100 years later when there is no discernible negative impact from that weir which is a few kilometres upstream on the mighty Burdekin River—a massive river? We are talking about a 10,000 megalitre dam. After spending tens of millions of dollars, the poor old Charters Towers council is constrained as a town, which is why I was talking to the state development minister today. They cannot grow because they cannot get any water. There are more and more conditions lumped on this project to the point where the council has given it back to the state and said, 'We cannot do it.' Where is the threshold, Minister, where the government says, 'We will be an enabler and try to help you and not just throw conditions on you like a hamster wheel and passively observe'?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I know how passionate he is about the Big Rocks Weir project moving forward. I have been on the site where the weir will go and talked to the previous mayor. I have also had conversations with the new mayor in relation to Big Rocks Weir. The Miles Labor government has allocated \$30 million to the project. The department will continue to work through the Coordinator-General. That is why you were obviously reflecting on this project with Minister Grace Grace this morning.

The Queensland government will continue to work with the Charters Towers council. I received a letter from them as recently as last week as part of them handing the project over. We will work very closely with the council to make sure that we can make a decision on that project moving forward in time. It is a significant project. We are supporting it. It is 20,000 megalitres of water—not 10. We have supported this project right the way through. That is why we have put money on the table to support the council to do the early works and to progress the EIS. Now we have received that letter, the department will work with council on a way forward for that project.

**Mr KATTER:** I appreciate you clearing up that the money is still there with the federal government. In terms of the HIPCo project, we have the Flinders River. It is 1,000 kilometres long and has over 3.6 megalitres in volume. I think that is questionable because I do not think it is able to be measured that well when there are those big inland oceans of water that I have flown over now a few times in flood. I do not know how that is possibly measured with any accuracy. We have still only released 220,000 megalitres, of which only a quarter has actually been used. We are sitting there with HIPCo saying it is a 74,000 megalitre dam and here we are years later after \$170 million has been spent and we are spending millions again and we seem no closer to any outcome. We have single users like Andrew Pauli applying for small licences. After 12 years in this place we seem to be no closer. It is the last piece of typography on the headwaters of the Flinders before you are on that flat country where it all becomes very expensive. There are not a lot of options there and that is one community scheme that we have that has a displaced benefit among a number of users, not just one big user, like you have at Etta Plains.

When will the government start enabling and stop lumping conditions on and standing back and massively observing instead of trying to drive through? I sure we will find 100 conditions for this, but, at some point, the government needs to decide whether it wants to drive this or not. I want to know if as a government you are going to sit back and just listen to what the department tells you all the time?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. The member well knows that I have been involved with the proponents of HIPCo. I have had multiple meetings with the member in relation to it. The reasons he talked about are why we brought forward the regional water plan for the Flinders catchment. Not only is the HIPCo project looking for that extra water but also it is an old water plan and it needs to be upgraded. That is why we brought it forward: to do that. We did that particularly because

HIPCo wrote us a letter. They asked that we take that path to do the water plan, open it up and have a decent look and get all stakeholders engaged and involved, particularly all of those people who are looking for water in that catchment.

You are right: it is a very big catchment and we want to make sure we can identify whether there is enough water in the plan moving forward to make sure that multiple projects of this type can get up, not just a couple along the way. I will continue to work through the plan with the department to make sure that every one of those stakeholders has the opportunity to be engaged in the process of the water plan. You are right: it is a big area for agriculture, but it is also a big area for our future opportunities in terms of those rare minerals that we need to extract into the future. We will see what the water plan comes up with. We will make sure you are well informed of the opportunities for the people you engage with to be part of the water plan and the consultation as part of that.

**Mr KATTER:** Under that, there is nothing to stop a small-scale allocation of 4,000 or 5,000 megalitres being given out now. You do not need a tender. There could be small-scale users of water now; is that correct?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. Part of the allocations of the regional water plans is for the department to decide. I am not sure if the director-general has any further information on those small allocations that could potentially come out.

**Ms Dobe:** I thank the member for the question. I would have to get advice on what the upper limit is on very small-scale works that can be done at the moment without an allocated water release. There is water available for not just smaller scale projects through the Great Artesian Basin that underlies. We are actively talking to people at the moment about accessing water through capping artesian bores and being able to get a portion of the allocation of the water that is saved.

**Mr KATTER:** I think what you are talking about there is very small but welcome. I have one last question and it is about something that I think is an impossible condition to meet. Going forward on the Flinders River, do you intend to keep the condition whereby anyone has to be indemnified by downstream users? We have had a discussion about their property rights, and to me that cuts right to the nub of this issue. They would have never built the Sydney Harbour Bridge if they were worried about property rights and whether they would have met the combined benefits. If there is a combined user benefit for a water storage, yes, of course you will take rights away from someone; that is the whole point of trying to drive these things.

**Ms Dobe:** I thank member for the question. The way that the water plans and the requirements are set up is that any infrastructure that is built cannot impact on the water entitlements that are downstream.

**Mr KATTER:** That is an impossible condition to meet.

**Ms Dobe:** There are ways that you can change that, by the proponent for the project purchasing those water allocations.

**Mr KATTER:** That is practically impossible. If that is the answer, I will accept it, but that is practically impossible.

**Ms Dobe:** I think if you were one of those customers, though—

**Mr KATTER:** That is just crazy.

**Ms Dobe:**—who is using that water, it would be very difficult to have reliability for those entitlements.

**Mr KATTER:** Okay. We will look forward to nothing ever coming out because no-one will ever meet that condition from Hughenden. You are not going to agree for five people downstream to give up their rights and say, 'We're fine.' What is the price? There is no cap on the price, so there is no way that can be resolved.

**CHAIR:** It sounds that is a comment. We are running out of time. Do you have anything else, member for Traeger?

**Mr KATTER:** No.

**CHAIR:** We will have a very brief question from the member for Mirani which will need a very brief answer.

**Mr ANDREW:** I have a question to do with the pipeline to Mount Morgan. The situation was brought to me that there were two quotes, one by a local contractor and one by an interstate contractor. The local contractor was asked to requote and increase their price. I do not know what the story was there. Could the minister tell me why we did not work with the local contractor over an interstate contractor, please?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. It will be a very short answer. The project is a Rockhampton Regional Council project. They are the proponents. They are the ones who engaged with the contractors for the job. Any of those questions you have in relation to the contracts that were set up or sharpening the pencil should go to the Rockhampton Regional Council. We funded the project. Rockhampton Regional Council do all the works and engage with the proponents and the people doing the job. You are best off asking the mayor.

**Mr ANDREW:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** We will now go to about 10 minutes worth of questions from government members. First up is the member for Bundaberg.

**Mr SMITH:** With reference to page 88 of Budget Paper 3, can the minister give an update on investments to Sunwater's industrial pipelines, and are there any plans to modify structural arrangements?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I might tackle the second part of the question first, if that is okay. We are a government that is absolutely keeping our assets in public hands. We have a desalination plant in public hands. We have dams and other public infrastructure all in public hands. In a state as large as Queensland, Sunwater's network of pipelines plays a critical role in supporting our regional economies and communities. Sunwater has 2,000 kilometres of industrial pipelines in Queensland. These are vital for our regional communities and regional economies. This network delivers reliable and consistent water supply for industrial, mining, irrigation and community use. Mining and agriculture are cornerstones of the Queensland economy, with mining worth over \$86 billion each year and almost 90 per cent of land in Queensland used for agriculture. Both industries are heavily dependent on safe and reliable water supply to them.

This year's budget invests \$10 million into the Burdekin-Moranbah pipeline, which is a critical pipeline linking Burdekin Falls Dam to mining operations in the Bowen Basin and local communities. This budget allocation is part of a \$38 million project to improve the pipeline's efficiency and reliability. We are also investing \$4 million this year in the Eungella water pipeline. This investment will improve supply to mining customers in the Moranbah area and includes upgrades to a pump station and backup power supply for that project.

For the Burdekin and Townsville areas, Sunwater is progressing plans to modernise the Burdekin Haughton Water Supply Scheme to improve supply and reduce costs for sugarcane, industrial and mining customers, with supply and reliability benefits also expected to flow through to urban customers. I know that Sunwater is regularly engaging with industry to ensure that its pipeline meets customer needs, and our government will continue to support that effort from them.

These pipelines are the backbone of our regional economies in places like the Bowen Basin, the Burnett and the north-west regions. They are important assets for Sunwater and our state. We will continue to invest in their maintenance to ensure they continue to serve our regions well into the future. Let's not forget: the LNP were ready to sell off these assets when they were last in government. They had selling off Sunwater's pipeline business front and centre in their little black book of water cuts. Of course, they will always stay in public hands under a Miles Labor government.

**CHAIR:** We have talked a bit about the Burdekin Falls Dam. Can you update the committee on how the Burdekin Falls Dam Improvement Project will support water security and economic growth in North Queensland?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. Burdekin Falls Dam is our largest dam in Queensland, holding more than 1.8 million megalitres, which is four times the capacity of Sydney Harbour. Thanks to this government, it is going to get even bigger. Sunwater is getting on with the two-metre raising of the Burdekin Falls Dam. This is an important project for dam safety and for water security and will unlock more water allocations for North Queensland. Our recent budget locks in a \$540 million commitment to this project, with Sunwater investing \$73.9 million in 2024-25. Raising the wall will boost the dam's capacity by more than 570,000 megalitres and create a further 150,000 megalitres of new water allocations for customers as well as support 400 jobs during construction. This new water supply will support long-term economic growth across existing industries such as irrigation and new industries such as hydrogen.

The design for the two-metre raise will include strengthening works to comply with the updated dam safety standards in Queensland. Downstream communities can be confident that the dam will continue to operate safely during extreme weather events. The two-metre raise is supported by the Burdekin Basin water plan, which holds 150,000 megalitres of strategic reserve, and Sunwater already owns more than 98 per cent of the additional land required for the raise. This option stacks up economically and environmentally. Sunwater is getting on with the job and has awarded six contracts worth a combined \$1.7 million supporting 50 jobs in the Townsville region. Onsite activities are ramping up, with drilling and surveying works underway. Drilling and trenching are being undertaken to examine the dam's foundation, main structures and saddle dams, and the project team will assess clay and sand in the area. These activities will enable Sunwater to better understand the workforce, equipment and material requirements to inform construction.

So far, local suppliers from Townsville and Ayr have been contracted to provide accommodation, office and laboratory testing facilities as well as plant hire and plumbing services. Sunwater has also been engaged with stakeholders including landholders and traditional owners to ensure local interests are considered throughout the work. Sunwater is currently progressing the EIS for that project which will include a public consultation process later this year. The outcome of this process will inform the final investment decision. Before I lose my voice, raising Burdekin Falls Dam will deliver a massive boost to the Townsville and Burdekin regional economies, and I look forward to seeing this important project moving forward.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. To assuage all your fears, the last question of the day will go to the member for Capalaba.

**Mr BROWN:** Thank you, Chair, and I am glad that I get to finish the day off on an issue that is really close to my heart. With reference to page 2 of the SDS, will the minister update the committee on the success of the Mareeba-Dimbulah supply scheme efficiency project?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I know how passionate he is about the Mareeba-Dimbulah supply scheme efficiency program. This is a project that has always exceeded expectations. The \$32.54 million project, jointly funded by the Queensland and Australian governments, has seen more than 11,500 megalitres of water being saved annually, surpassing the project's target of 8,306 megalitres. That is nearly 40 per cent more than we expected, which is absolutely fantastic. The water savings achieved are equivalent to 4,600 Olympic-sized swimming pools—water that is now available to our irrigators on the Tablelands, and I know they appreciate that.

Delivered by Sunwater, the project replaced 14 kilometres of pipeline, including 4.4 kilometres at East Barron, 2.6 kilometres at Atherton Creek and seven kilometres at Southedge's West Barron main channel. It also installed 125 automated irrigation channel control gates at strategic locations to better measure and regulate water flow within the irrigation channels. These gates are coordinated together, reducing overflow losses and returning those losses back into the scheme as useable allocations for our irrigators. The project also delivered an upgrade to 157 water offtakes.

With more than 17,000 hectares of farmland, the Tablelands is one of Queensland's most significant food bowls, and water availability in this region is a key driver of growth and jobs in that region. The project is expected to deliver more than \$20 million per year in increased agricultural production, and this is a significant economic boost to that region. The additional water now available for purchase will support a wide variety of crops grown in the region including bananas, mangoes, avocados, coffee and vegetables. This is a huge win for growers on the Tablelands who can produce more fresh food for Queenslanders as well as increase local jobs and support those local thriving communities. The Queensland government has more than \$20 million invested into this project as part of our record \$6.6 billion investment in water infrastructure, which has created more than 3,900 jobs across the state. I will leave that there because I need to finish the question about Sunwater, if that is okay.

**Mr SMITH:** You are cutting that short? Oh!

**Mr BUTCHER:** I know that you are passionate about that question, member. I am advised by Sunwater that, if we understand the question correctly, this issue related to the St George scheme. Sunwater's end-of-water-year process involves undertaking a final meter reading, reviewing and finalising water use over the year and providing invoices to their customers. The St George scheme invoices were finalised for customers in mid-July. If the member would like more information, I am happy to offer a briefing with Sunwater's billing and accounts processing team, if required.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, the issue regarding land resumption at Nathan Dam was superseded by the answers?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It was superseded and I am satisfied with the answer. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much indeed. We have reached the end of the time allocated for consideration of proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water. Thank you to the minister, officials, staff and departmental officers for your attendance. Did you want to do a quick wrap-up of things, Minister?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Very quickly, Chair. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for the opportunity to be here this evening, and I appreciate that they are very long days for the committee. I appreciate the member for Burleigh not being kicked out on his last estimates, so I acknowledge that. There has certainly been a lot going on in my portfolio, and I appreciate the opportunity to talk at length about water infrastructure investment, regional and economic development and how we are growing our manufacturing industry. Thanks to everyone for staying back so late, including staff. A big thank you to the committee once again, to the shadow minister for turning up tonight, to the department and director-general of TMR, to the heads of our government owned corporations and to the staff in my office as well as the director-general's staff for all of the work that they put in to this process. Thank you all very much.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Well said.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. I also want to note that this is the last estimates for the member for Burleigh. You did really well today, member for Burleigh—not even a warning, so I am pleased but perhaps a little bit disappointed. This concludes the hearing of estimates for the Housing, Big Build and Manufacturing Committee for 2024. Thank you to my fellow committee members and thank you to the visiting members. Thank you to the secretariat, which has done amazing work for this process. Thank you also to Hansard—thank you so much—and the parliamentary broadcast staff, together with all of the other parliamentary staff who have helped us here today. Thanks once again to all of the officers, officials and staff involved. I declare the hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 9.17 pm.**