



HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr R Molhoek MP—Chair
Ms SL Bolton MP
Ms K-A Dooley MP
Mr JP Kelly MP
Mr DJL Lee MP
Dr BF O'Shea MP

Staff present:

Dr J Rutherford—Committee Secretary
Miss A Bonenfant—Assistant Committee Secretary

PUBLIC BRIEFING—INQUIRY INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, TOURISM, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION ON THE *ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024*

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 19 February 2025

Brisbane

WEDNESDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2025

The committee met at 10.35 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open this public briefing for the committee's inquiry into the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation on the *Annual report 2023-2024*. My name is Robert Molhoek MP. I am the member for Southport and chair of the committee. I acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this state and their elders past, present and emerging. I also acknowledge the former members of this parliament who have participated in and nourished the democratic institutions of this state. Finally, I acknowledge the people of this state, whether they have been born here or have chosen to make this state their home, whom we represent to make laws and conduct other business for the peace, welfare and good government of this state.

With me here today are: Mr Joe Kelly MP, member for Greenslopes and deputy chair; Ms Sandy Bolton MP, member for Noosa; Mr David Lee MP, member for Hervey Bay; Dr Barbara O'Shea MP, member for South Brisbane; and Ms Kerri-Anne Dooley MP, member for Redcliffe.

This briefing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the briefing at the discretion of the committee.

I remind committee members that officers are here to provide factual or technical information. Any questions seeking an opinion about policy should be directed to the minister or left to debate on the floor of the House. These proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. Please turn your mobiles phones off or to silent mode.

ANDERSON, Mr Chad, Deputy Director-General, Tourism, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation

CURTIS, Ms Mary-Anne, Deputy Director-General, Environment and Heritage Policy and Programs, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation

DIFFEY, Ms Lea, Deputy Director-General, Innovation, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation

JACOBS, Mr Mark, Deputy Director-General, Science, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation

KLAASSEN, Mr Ben, Deputy Director-General, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation

O'CALLAGHAN, Ms Patricia, Director-General, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation

VAN DER LAAK, Ms Vivienne, Acting Deputy Director-General, Corporate Services, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation

WIRTH, Mr Brad, Acting Deputy Director-General, Environmental Services and Regulation, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation

CHAIR: I welcome representatives from the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation who have been invited to brief the committee on the annual report. Please remember to press your microphones on before you start speaking and off when you are finished. I invite you to provide a briefing to the committee, after which committee members will have some questions for you.

Ms O'Callaghan: I too would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which we meet and thank the chair for the opportunity to appear before this committee. I am honoured to be announced as the new director-general of the newly formed Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation. We have got to work quickly since we have been formed.

The Premier and the minister have set a vision for the department, and our department has been moving swiftly to deliver. We are already well underway in developing a new strategic plan for our unified department that will not just give us a united purpose but collectively reflect on our experiences, whilst acknowledging our department's rich history and culture with working with Queenslanders.

With more than 3,000 of our team living between the cape and Coolangatta, we have invited every person in our team to contribute their insights and ideas to help shape the vision, purpose and objectives for the next four years. Our vision is to ensure that everyone benefits from and enjoys not just a thriving environment but a thriving economy. This means that while we develop and grow the state we do it sustainably whilst protecting and developing our state.

We aim to make Queensland the global epicentre for extraordinary, unmatched nature-based experiences. The foundation is there for us to use. Our canvas is very special: five World Heritage sites, 322 national parks, the most biodiverse region in Australia, and the only state that has two of the oldest living cultures in the world calling it home.

We are working hard on our consultation on the Destination 2045 tourism plan. We are already well advanced. Over the past two months we have made a commitment to listen to Queenslanders and to the industry. We have travelled across the state with the tourism industry, ensuring everyone gets an opportunity to have a say on what the next 20 years for tourism looks like. Our engagement is genuine as well as passionate.

We want to use the feedback from not just the industry but also our communities to create a compelling vision for our visitor economy. This vision will build on some really strong foundations set before us. We want to leverage our natural assets and competitive advantages as well as capitalise on the tourism opportunities to 2032. We want to work with our industry, and we acknowledge that we have a special canvas that we also need to look after for generations to come.

A priority for me and our team is to collaborate very closely with our industry and the government and set clear direction and strong priorities, because we do want to be held accountable for what we say we will be delivering. As part of our charter in coming together as a department, we know we have some priority projects: the Smithfield Mountain Bike Trails; the Gold Coast Nature-Based Tourism Program; \$4.9 million for the Palm Island walking trails; five new and expanded wildlife hospitals; employing over 150 additional rangers; \$35 million to work with local governments to upgrade stormwater assets to prevent litter and plastics from entering Moreton Bay; and progressing the Whitsunday Skyway. These are just a few of the priorities in the coming term.

We also know how important our Great Barrier Reef is, and this is a focal point of our new department. The recent progress report provided to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee by the Australian government showcased that, whilst there has been significant progress, we certainly need to keep our eye on it moving into the future. We need to ensure progress with water quality and land clearing. There has been some progress with gillnet fishing. There are many commitments and, while some are on track, we acknowledge that some are not on track. That is a focus for us because we want to work with the Australian government to ensure the Great Barrier Reef stays off the in-danger list.

Speaking of iconic Queensland creatures, we know that Queensland's natural wonders would not be complete without us noting the koala. We know that this precious species is not only a vital part of our natural habitat but also a huge tourism drawcard. We recognise the challenges facing koalas on the east coast of Australia. We are currently working on a new South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy. We are building upon past efforts but incorporating the latest science and best practices to ensure that we are supporting and protecting the species moving forward.

We always want to ensure that we are improving our environmental protection and regulatory framework. We are reviewing our policies at the moment and looking at legislation to ensure we are effective and responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities across different sectors. I

acknowledge that finding the right balance between environmental protection and economic development, whilst not easy, is so important, and we take feedback and our role in this area extremely responsibly. We certainly do not take it lightly.

We know that we have a role in protecting and conserving our ecological gifts as well as expanding our public and private protected estate. Our Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has acquired more than 30 properties in recent years, and we are working to bring them into the protected areas network. We are the largest land manager in Queensland. We know that we have a profound responsibility in this area.

We know as well that our staff are working really hard on fire management. We have recently seen what has happened in LA. Our own team here in Queensland worked tirelessly to battle over 160 fires this past fire season. Whilst we have had some rain, we know that this is certainly not an area where we can take our foot off the pedal. We have robust burn strategies to mitigate bushfire risk. We have a specialist team of 30 rangers who focus just on this. We know that they play an important role in travelling around the state and talking in particular to our regional mayors, councillors and stakeholders. They know how important our ranger program is.

Pest management comes up a lot as well. We play a crucial role in this. We used a science-based approach. Again, we have an increase in rangers to ensure we are keeping our eye on this. We are also a new member of the Resources Cabinet Committee. We are working collaboratively with other departments to ensure we are supporting our resources sector whilst ensuring we take our role as a regulator really seriously. It is a balance, but we believe we can do that by working in this setting with our stakeholders.

On top of that, we know we have a robust environmental compliance program. Transparency is important, which is what we have outlined in our annual report. As Queensland's population grows, we also know an area of focus for our team is waste. In the waste sector, we are reducing our environmental impact and transitioning to a circular economy, but using innovation and those with the technology and the know-how can really help solve our problems. We have a number of programs in our innovation portfolio that can also support this.

From a science point of view, I do want to say that we have some of the brightest minds working for our state at the moment. Listening to them as they provide evidence-based approaches is really important. We are also connecting them with the commercial sector to ensure they are looking at opportunities such as decarbonising our environments; looking at working with the agricultural, medical and health sciences sectors; as well as using quantum technologies and advanced materials and robotics. It is trying to share the knowledge we have but also partner where we can.

This is an exciting portfolio and we are excited about where we are moving with it. As a department, we have a big job ahead. I acknowledge that. I have set out some of the priorities for our future. I acknowledge the annual reports that have been presented as reflections of our past. I am open to any questions from the committee on any of those areas.

Mr J KELLY: Thanks, Ms O'Callaghan, for your presentation. In the 2023-24 financial year, I believe 12 properties were purchased, which was referenced in your annual report, for the expansion of protected areas. I believe Vergemont Station was one of those properties. Could you provide the committee with an update on the progress to transition the property to an appropriate tender under the Nature Conservation Act and any rangers who have been stationed on that property?

Ms O'Callaghan: I do acknowledge that protected areas are an important part of our portfolio and obviously expanding them as well. You are right: Vergemont Station is an important part of our portfolio. We have acquired approximately 352,000 hectares of that property. We are currently working with a number of different agencies and government departments on what that looks like moving forward. We have been engaging with the Remote Area Planning and Development Board. We have also been talking to some of our local stakeholders. I will now bring in our deputy director-general to give some further updates on the questions that you have asked.

Mr Klaassen: What we are currently doing at Vergemont is assessments of the values of the property. We have had scientists out there. We have worked with the traditional owners. We are engaging with the opal-mining industry, which has a large footprint on the property. We are basically considering all of those various factors, working out the alignment of how we are going to tenure partition that property, and then we will put some recommendations to the government around that.

Mr J KELLY: I spent a bit of time on the agriculture committee with former member Lachlan Millar. He loved nothing better than talking about the Channel Country. This is a question around the Lake Eyre Basin. Can you provide an update on any environmental authorities issued for those with preserved rights under the transitional arrangements as part of the additional protections for the flood plains and the rivers of the Lake Eyre Basin that was announced last year?

Ms O'Callaghan: The Lake Eyre Basin, as you noted, is a really important ecological and culturally significant part of Queensland. We certainly have worked on some of those protections. It has been important that we balance the ecological and cultural significance of the region with the economic opportunity that it presents. We have also ensured that environmental assessments of petroleum and gas activities in the Lake Eyre Basin are considering the important environmental values of the area. We are currently assessing a number of projects within the legislative policy framework. I will now bring in my acting deputy director-general, Brad Wirth, to provide some further information.

Mr Wirth: In respect of the Lake Eyre Basin, I do not have the numbers on me. It may be in this material. I will look through it and take that on notice and pass that back to the committee. There are rigorous assessment processes that exist for the environmental authorities in that area. It is still permissible under certain circumstances for EAs to be issued and amendments to occur for those authorities. The department assesses each of those on its merits in accordance with the legislative overlay and frameworks that we have currently. I will work through the material to see if I have that information and endeavour to provide the number of environmental authorities.

CHAIR: We are happy for you to take that on notice.

Mr LEE: I have a couple of finance related questions. Can you advise the committee how much money is currently in the Queensland government offsets account?

Ms O'Callaghan: With regard to our offsets account, in the 2023-24 financial year, expenditure from the offsets account totals \$9.9 million, including \$2.1 million in the 2023-24 financial year. In terms of how much money is currently in the account, as of 31 January 2025 the offsets account balance is \$77 million.

Mr LEE: I note in the annual report there is a reference to machinery-of-government changes and a number of climate change departments have been transferred to the Department of Energy and Climate. Notwithstanding that, there is an \$11 million increase in the line item that deals with outsourced service delivery. Can you provide an explanation to the committee as to what constitutes that \$11 million in outsourced services?

Ms O'Callaghan: Member, with the \$11 million, what is the line item? We are trying to locate it. Is it with regard to offsets or is it another line item more broadly?

Mr LEE: If you refer to note B2-2, 'Supplies and Services', that line item indicates an \$11 million increase from the financial year 2023-24.

Ms O'Callaghan: Chair, I might take that on notice so we can get the exact information on that line item.

CHAIR: Yes. I will go to the member for Noosa.

Ms BOLTON: Good morning, everyone, and congratulations, Ms O'Callaghan, on your appointment. It is excellent. Thank you for your opening statement. You mentioned a few things so I have a lot of questions. However, I am only allowed two—otherwise, I will be in big trouble—so I am going to try to wrap it in a couple of questions. You mentioned new strategies and policies that you are working on. Regarding ecotourism, I know that consultation on Destination 2045 is going on at the moment. Within the various recommendations and also in the QAO 2023-24 report, some significant things are raised, including around the complexity of obtaining government approvals for ecotourism facilities.

CHAIR: Member for Noosa, I think your question might be more relevant to the next briefing.

Ms BOLTON: Yes, I know, but I am coming from a DETSI angle. I will get to it. One of the key issues going back is the primacy of the cardinal principle. If section 35 of the Nature Conservation Act was removed—if you removed that exception—that would take away a lot of the complexity because it relates to protected areas. Within developing new strategy and policy, will this be looked at to ensure those ecotourism facilities are actually adjacent to instead of an option?

CHAIR: We may have strayed into areas of policy and opinion. I am happy for the director-general to comment if she wishes.

Ms O'Callaghan: In light of our ecotourism process, I acknowledge the QAO report recommendations and I will not take up the committee's time because I will probably touch on that in the next part. As part of that process and in line with the 20-year tourism strategy, we are developing an ecotourism policy that will be completed by mid that year. As part of that process—and to your earlier point, member, around the combination of the environment and tourism team—we are looking at ways that we can facilitate and support ecotourism projects on and off national parks. In terms of definitions and what that process looks like, including the assessment framework, that will be completed as part of that policy presentation to government and it will be a government decision.

Ms BOLTON: Is there any consultation on that?

Ms O'Callaghan: We are absolutely consulting with the industry and the community on ecotourism at the moment. We held an ecotourism round table two weeks ago. Ecotourism forms a key component of our workshops that we are hosting in every region. We are certainly taking feedback from not just industry but also community on what that ecotourism policy looks like.

Ms BOLTON: My second question is around the funding of protected areas and national parks and that value management framework. In a nutshell, going forward will that be simplified in a way that is understandable by communities?

Ms O'Callaghan: I can maybe talk about the high-line framework that we are working in, and I might bring my deputy director-general in as well. One of the remits that the government has given us is to try to simplify this process and create a clear pathway for not just investors but potential projects as well. As a state, we are also delivering ecotourism projects. I will bring in our deputy director-general of QPWS, Ben Klaassen, to give some further specifics around that value management framework.

Ms BOLTON: It is in relation to the management of the parks, not ecotourism projects per se.

Mr Klaassen: The values-based management framework is based on identifying those key values that the parks have been set aside for and coming up with strategies for how we will manage those. An important part of that is making sure that is easily understood and communicated to park users and stakeholders. We are continuously looking at how we do that. We have our management plans and then we have various strategies that sit underneath our management plan: a visitor strategy, a fire strategy or a pest strategy. Those documents are written in simple language to try to be clear to the people as to what our key threatening processes might be, what the opportunities are and what actions we are going to take about how we progress those. We are always happy to receive feedback if people think they can be simplified. We are doing that across a range of parks at the moment.

Ms DOOLEY: Good morning and thank you for joining us. It is great to have such a large cohort of you here. My question is regarding the annual report. How many times did the Queensland government offset committee meet in 2023-24?

Ms O'Callaghan: The Offsets Project Management Committee met three times in 2023-24.

Ms DOOLEY: How much money has been committed from the Recycling and Jobs Fund?

Ms O'Callaghan: In terms of the Recycling and Jobs Fund, over the first six years of the fund the key areas of commitment include the following: \$30 million for education and behaviour change programs, \$157 million for circular economy initiatives, \$230 million for regional waste management plans and implementation, \$147 million for industry development and infrastructure, and \$116 million for regulatory assessments and compliance.

Mr J KELLY: In relation to that last question—and you might have to take this on notice—can you provide the committee with an update on how the levels of recycling have changed in various areas? If you can do it on the spot, great; if not, take it on notice.

Ms O'Callaghan: I think we can give you an update on that. I will now hand over to our deputy director-general Mary-Anne from EHPP to give an update on that.

Ms Curtis: The most recent performance data for 2023-24 has been published on our website. It shows that we are on track to reach four of the nine 2025 targets in the waste strategy. We have made good progress on the construction and demolition waste and the commercial and industrial waste. However, the performance data shows there has been slower progress for the household waste, and that is an area of continued focus for us in terms of implementing the waste strategy going forward.

Ms DOOLEY: What was funded in 2023-24 from the Natural Capital Fund?

Ms O'Callaghan: In terms of the Natural Capital Fund and what was funded in 2023-24, we had \$135 million allocated to the Queensland Natural Capital Fund through the Land Restoration Fund. Trust and departmental direct investments include: \$45 million invested in the QNCF by the Queensland government through the LRF trust in 2022-23 and \$90 million invested in the QNCF by the Queensland government through DETSI in the 2024-25 year.

Dr O'SHEA: I know it is an awful lot of work and preparation that you have to put in to coming today, but thank you very much. In terms of protecting World Heritage sites, looking at the World Heritage tentative list submission, funding was allocated to work with traditional owners to progress the tentative listing. Can you advise what progress is being made to progress that listing?

Ms O'Callaghan: In terms of the status of the Cape York Peninsula World Heritage nomination—for some background, the cultural landscapes of Cape York Peninsula were added to Australia's World Heritage tentative list in June 2024. The listing signals Australia's intention to continue progressing towards a World Heritage nomination. We acknowledge that a World Heritage nomination is complex and lengthy and does require significant consultation and negotiation with TOs, landowners, councils and other key stakeholders with interests across Cape York Peninsula. In terms of World Heritage on Cape York Peninsula, there are obviously some differing views which have been expressed by our traditional owners and stakeholders, and the minister is intending to review this progress to date to develop the tentative listing before assessing options and what the next steps are.

Dr O'SHEA: I now turn to feral cat management. Obviously the department's agreement with the Commonwealth government with respect to feral cat management is key to preserving a number of threatened and endangered species in the parks, biosecurity and the agricultural industry. Has there been any change to funding for this program?

Ms O'Callaghan: Yes, it is a very important priority for us in terms of feral cat management. I will hand over to our deputy director-general of parks to answer this question.

Mr Klaassen: Yes, we have a range of programs that we deliver to try to address feral cats across our national parks and state forests. We also work collectively—it is a landscape-wide issue; it is not just on the parks where we need to deal with the cats. We are looking at increasing our investment in feral cat eradication for the next financial year because we recognise that it is a significant issue; they can impact a whole range of threatened species and are quite a significant pest that we have to deal with. Yes, we are continuing our efforts and we are actually looking to increase our efforts over the next 12 months.

CHAIR: I am particularly interested in issues around water quality and water modelling. Page 29 of the annual report outlines nine projects funded through the Queensland Water Modelling Network. Could you provide a little bit of detail on that?

Ms O'Callaghan: In terms of the nine projects funded through the Queensland Water Modelling Network, we have funded the following collaborative projects in 2023-24. Eight projects were funded through two open tenders, held in 2022 and 2023, that sought innovative solutions to challenges facing the Queensland water sector. In the 2022 tender there was economics for natural resource management investment planning and impact reporting with a pilot in the northern Murray-Darling Basin. In the 2023 tender we had a number of initiatives: water modelling in an uncertain but data-rich world, flood plain deposition modelling review and opportunities, multimodal assessment of drinking water security under climate change, a modelling framework for nutrition offsets, riparian Bayesian network and visualisation tools, Githabul First Nations water modelling projects, and First Nations knowledge and water modelling. The ninth project was the Capability, Collaboration and Capacity Program for the Queensland Water Modelling Network, a program delivered by a consortium led by the International WaterCentre at Griffith University and involving Alluvium, QUT, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, BMT, Aurecon, eWater, KPMG, Thoughts Drawn Out and E2DesignLab. That finishes in March 2025.

CHAIR: At the risk of being slightly self-indulgent, the water quality centre at Griffith was something that we initiated back when I was the chair of finance on the Gold Coast council, so I am very proud of the work that they are doing. I would like to switch from environment to innovation for a minute because you are not getting much of a go. Regarding the innovation portfolio, the annual report at page 27 discusses innovator and entrepreneur participation rates, which varied between the last two financial years, with rates for 2023-24 showing the female recipients' participation rate, at 33 per cent, was down on the previous year and First Nations recipients' participation rate of eight per cent was down two per cent. Can you provide a bit more information about that program and where it is heading?

Ms O'Callaghan: I might start and then I will hand over to our deputy director-general of innovation, who will have some—

CHAIR: It is always good to hear from the deputy directors-general to share the pressure.

Ms O'Callaghan: I certainly agree with that at the moment. Thank you for that question, Chair. From an innovation portfolio point of view, in our new department we are absolutely committed to a more diverse Queensland economy through our innovation programs. We know that we can be a leader in this area, but I think our deputy director-general will give you an update on some of these key areas that will not just address your question but look at how we can progress in this space.

Ms Diffey: Statistics in terms of participation rates around female and Indigenous innovators fluctuate depending on the totals over time and are published on our website. Our latest data is to September; we are currently reconciling to December. Of our 335 recipients under the Advance Queensland road map, since 2022, 79 recipients, or 23 per cent, are based in regional Queensland; 117 recipients, or 35 per cent, identify as female; and 26, or eight per cent of recipients, identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Advance Queensland has supported a couple of programs to try to increase the participation or to overcome barriers for these particular cohorts of innovators. For example, in 2024, round 2 of the Accelerating Female Founders Program funded 11 organisations that are supporting more than 500 female founders across the state. The program will run over two years through to June 2026. The Female Founders Co-Investment Fund matches private investment in majority female founded businesses to help these businesses to close their first capital raise. Several female founders are currently being supported by the fund with expanded eligibility requirements and it will support even more women during 2025.

The Queensland government's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander innovators continues, with a \$1.5 million investment in First Australians Capital, developed in partnership with the Queensland Investment Corporation. This includes support for the new First Nations Business Acceleration Program, which was launched this month, which provides greater innovation and entrepreneurial opportunities for Queensland's First Australians. This is about how we support connecting both Indigenous and female founders with investors and their companies into the future.

CHAIR: When you say we support innovators or individuals, what sort of support do we actually offer? Is it monetary or is it mentoring? Could you perhaps elaborate on what is available to aspiring entrepreneurs?

Ms Diffey: For aspiring entrepreneurs overall, there is a combination of financial as well as coaching or mentoring or other kinds of business support programs. An example is our Ignite Program, where we have two grant programs. There is the Ignite Spark Program, which is for grants of between \$50,000 and \$75,000 for people who are looking to prototype and prove up a product or an innovative service, and then there is the Ignite Ideas Fund, which is a longstanding grant program of either \$100,000 or \$200,000 of grant money to enter into a new market, whether that be a new product into the market or a product entering into a new market. We often find innovators, for example, might be in the agricultural sector but want to enter into the mining sector, so it is to assist those kinds of changes.

Wrapped around that program, we have recognised that financial support is not the only thing that these businesses need. They are often innovative, cutting new ground, so we have created the Ignite+ program, which is provided by third-party providers—and I cannot remember them off the top of my head. They provide tailored support depending on—there is Ignite+ for the Ignite Spark recipients, Ignite+ for the Ignite Ideas recipients and we have recently opened and closed an expression of interest for Ignite+ Scale for those businesses that are ready to scale. That is about providing the mentoring and support, the connections and networks that they will need to have success. In the female founders and the First Nations area there are similar kinds of arrangements, although they are not exactly the same.

CHAIR: Can you provide the committee with a little bit more information on some of those programs such as a written document or a link? I am conscious of time. We have time for a few more questions. I will go to the deputy chair. If we can try to keep the answers brief, we might get two or three more questions in.

Mr J KELLY: You mentioned decarbonisation as being a priority for the department, and I guess I would argue that climate change should probably be the No. 1 environmental issue that the department is dealing with. In light of the various views being taken at the federal level, particularly around nuclear as a way forward—and I have been informed reliably by people who work in industry

that the new state government is putting various renewable programs on hold—has the department done any modelling on what a nuclear power plant in Queensland would mean for decarbonisation or—

CHAIR: For Australia?

Mr J KELLY: No. I am asking whether modelling has been done in relation to a potential nuclear solution in Queensland or ceasing the current rollout of renewables.

Ms O'Callaghan: The answer is no.

Mr J KELLY: You mentioned in your opening statement that there was a new koala strategy being developed. Why is that required and when will it be available?

Ms O'Callaghan: Yes, we are updating the koala strategy. I will now bring in our deputy director-general of EHPP to give an update on that process and the timeframes.

Ms Curtis: The current strategy is for 2020 to 2025. It was originally designed over that timeframe, so it is timely now to review that strategy. We will obviously review the effectiveness of the previous strategy and use the learnings from that as well as engage with stakeholders to inform the development of a new strategy going forward, so that work is underway and we will provide an update at a later time.

CHAIR: I will allow one more question from the member for Hervey Bay, because he is itching to ask his question, and then we will have to conclude.

Mr LEE: Thanks, Chair. I am lucky to live at one of those five World Heritage listed locations, K'gari Fraser Island. In 2021 there was a devastating fire and, as a result of the fire, there were a number of IGEM recommendations made. What is the status of the implementation of those recommendations?

Ms O'Callaghan: Our deputy director-general has been leading that work, so I will now hand over to Ben Klaassen to give an update on where that is at.

Mr Klaassen: I can advise that the recommendations that are relevant to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service have been implemented. We are continuing to work with the Queensland Fire Department on a couple of recommendations that are still in progress which relate to broader strategy and technology matters. As you would appreciate, technology is somewhat challenging over on the island and getting messaging out to visitors is an important aspect of what we need to do. We have done a lot of work. We have invested new resources in a dedicated fire team on the island, we are doing regular planned burns and we are getting messaging out to visitors around camp fires and the risk of leaving camp fires unattended and not having a fire where you are not allowed to have a fire.

CHAIR: Thank you. That concludes this briefing. I am always a little bit sad when we have to conclude a briefing because there are always so many more questions we all want to ask. I am sure that feeling is not mutual, but thank you to all who have participated today. Thank you to our Hansard reporters. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. We have three questions on notice and your responses will be required by 10 am on 28 February 2025 so that we can include them in our deliberations. I declare this public briefing closed.

The committee adjourned at 11.18 am.