

WEDNESDAY, 3 AUGUST 2022

ESTIMATES—LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE—ATTORNEY- GENERAL; JUSTICE; WOMEN; PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Estimate Committee Members

Mr PS Russo—Chair
Mrs LJ Gerber
Ms SL Bolton
Ms JM Bush
Mr JE Hunt
Mr JM Krause

Members in Attendance

Mr MC Berkman
Mr TJ Nicholls
Ms AJ Camm
Ms RM Bates
Mr DR Last

In Attendance

Hon. SM Fentiman, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister
for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

Ms L Fraser Hardy, Chief of Staff

Ms P Werner, Acting Chief Financial Officer, Corporate Services

Ms A Radford, Senior Policy Adviser, Officer of the Attorney-General

Department of Justice and Attorney-General

Mr D Mackie, Director-General

Ms V Thomson, Deputy Director-General, Office of Liquor, Gaming and Fair Trading

Crime and Corruption Commission

Mr B Barbour, Chairperson

Legal Aid Queensland

Ms N Davies, Chief Executive Officer


Electoral Commission of Queensland

Mr P Vidgen, Electoral Commissioner

The Public Trustee

Mr S Zhouand, Public Trustee of Queensland

The committee met at 9.00 am.

 **CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the Legal Affairs and Safety 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 people whose lands, winds and waters we all share.

I am Peter Russo, the member for Toohey and chair of the committee. Mrs Laura Gerber, the member for Currumbin, is the deputy chair. The other committee members are: Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa; Ms Jonty Bush, the member for Cooper; Mr Jason Hunt, the member for Caloundra; and Mr Jon Krause, the member for Scenic Rim. The committee has granted leave for a number of non-committee members to attend and ask questions at the hearing today. Other members may seek leave over the course of the proceedings.

Today the committee will consider the Appropriation Bill 2022 and the budget estimates for the committee's areas of responsibility. I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as chair 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.

I ask all present to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode, if not turned off. I encourage everyone to wear face masks while in the chamber and remind members and officials to remove face masks when speaking. I also remind everyone that food is not permitted in this chamber.

The House has determined that the committee will examine estimates for its portfolio areas in the following order: Justice and Attorney-General from 9.00 am to 12.45 pm, Police from 1.30 pm to 2.45 pm, Corrective Services from 3.00 pm to 4.00 pm and Fire and Emergency Services from 4.15 pm to 5.15 pm.

Attorney, I invite you to make an opening statement.

Ms FENTIMAN: Thank you, Chair. Good morning to you and the members of the committee. I am pleased to address the committee on the 2022-23 budget and the many reforms that we are delivering. It is vital for our courts to keep pace with the rapid advances in technology. That is why we are investing \$246 million over five years to modernise our courts, which includes \$22 million to replace the Beaudesert courthouse.

Technology is only part of the answer though to making sure all Queenslanders have access to justice. We also need to invest in the people who are providing services on the front line. Legal Aid Queensland will receive \$76.8 million over four years and \$21.2 million per year ongoing to increase essential legal services such as free access to duty lawyers in court, dispute resolution and general legal advice. The Queensland Human Rights Commission, which has seen a growing demand for its services during the pandemic, will also receive increased funding of \$6.9 million over five years and \$1.3 million per year ongoing. We have asked the Queensland Law Reform Commission to recommend a framework for a decriminalised sex work industry in Queensland to improve health, human rights and legal protection for workers.

We have released a four-year gambling harm minimisation plan outlining the shared roles and responsibilities for government, industry and the community to reduce harm. The budget also includes \$7.5 million over four years to strengthen casino and gaming regulation and provide targeted initiatives and enhanced gambling help services. The Office of Fair Trading successfully returned \$10.6 million to Queensland consumers in 2021 following more than 18,000 consumer complaints, including more than 5,600 related to personnel and household goods.

The committee will be aware that the Palaszczuk government places the highest priority on ending domestic and family violence. We have committed to criminalising coercive control—a pattern of behaviours that are inextricably linked with the risk of domestic abuse and homicide.

This budget includes an investment of \$363 million to respond to all recommendations of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. Included in that funding is more than \$49 million over four years to undertake upgrades to courthouses at Toowoomba, Cairns, Brisbane, Rockhampton, Maroochydore, Caboolture, Mackay and Ipswich. I was pleased to announce last month that a specialist domestic and family violence court will be established in both Brisbane and Cairns. The Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce recently delivered its final report, making a further 188 recommendations to improve the experiences of women and girls in our criminal justice system.

This government will always support the hardworking and dedicated services which support those most at risk from the moment they reach out for help. That is why I am so pleased today to announce that DV Connect will receive an extra \$2 million over the next two years to help the service keep up with such high demand. This is on top of the \$6.5 million provided in the budget. DV Connect is the vital first port of call for women escaping violence and we must ensure someone is always on the end of the line to help. DV Connect has responded to more than 300,000 calls over the past three years, which has coincided with rising public awareness about the dangers of coercive control as well as the added pressures of the pandemic. We know this demand peaked in 2020 when DV Connect answered a call every five minutes, with around 41 per cent of those calls from regional and rural areas. I know this additional support will help ensure that no women slip through the cracks.

We are committed to building a Queensland where women and girls have equal access to the opportunities afforded by our great state. That is why we launched the new Queensland women's strategy. It focuses particularly on making sure women have secure jobs, which we know is at the heart of gender equality.

Chair and committee members, as I have outlined, the department is strengthening the state justice system and creating fairer and safer communities right across the state.

CHAIR: As determined by the House the committee will now examine areas within the Attorney-General's portfolio. The visiting member present this morning is Mr Tim Nicholls MP, the member for Clayfield. I remind those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in the Legislative Assembly apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard.

For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the Attorney-General or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of Justice and Attorney-General and associated statutory bodies open for examination. We will now go to questions. I hand over to the deputy chair.

Mrs GERBER: Thank you, Chair. I will hand over to the shadow Attorney-General, the member for Clayfield, for the first question.

Mr NICHOLLS: Minister, thank you for your presentation. My first question is to the director-general. Mr Mackie, on 30 March 2022 the Attorney-General told the parliament an adviser from her office had requested legal advice as to the powers the Attorney had to sack the chair of the Crime and Corruption Commission. Did you provide this advice to the Attorney-General or discuss giving this advice to the Attorney-General in any way?

Mr Mackie: I believe the Attorney has previously spoken about this publicly. I think any legal advice coming from my department would have privilege attached to it and unfortunately I probably would not be able to answer that question.

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes, the Attorney did mention the matter both on 30 and 31 March and her answer is recorded in *Hansard*. The issue is not the contents of the legal advice. The Attorney has already confirmed that an adviser in her office sought that advice. The question is: did you discuss that matter; the provision of that advice, not the content of it, to the Attorney along the lines of, 'Attorney, this has been requested. I have this advice' or 'Attorney, this is what the advice says'? Did you discuss that with the Attorney at any time?

Mr Mackie: No. I had no discussion with the Attorney-General at all about that advice.

Mr NICHOLLS: Minister, given that the then chair of the CCC, Mr MacSparran, who has resigned, and the then integrity commissioner, who have both now left the Public Service, were publicly canvassing the influence of Labor lobbyists and the effect of lobbyists on government, is there any relationship with your office seeking legal advice about the sacking of the then chair of the CCC?

Ms FENTIMAN: No, there is not.

Mr NICHOLLS: I ask the chair of the CCC to come forward, please. I see, Mr Barbour, you were in a fairly handy position to come forward. You must have been expecting something.

Mr Barbour: I have been briefed that that is the case.

Mr NICHOLLS: There is my first question. Mr Barbour, I refer to Investigation Workshop undertaken by the CCC. Can I ask the nature of the documents on the laptop that was removed from the Integrity Commissioner's office that caused the former integrity commissioner to escalate her concerns to the CCC? What were the documents the commissioner was concerned about in relation to that that were contained on that laptop?

Mr Barbour: Investigation Workshop commenced as a result of some concerns that the Integrity Commissioner had in relation to her examination of material that had been reconstructed by the IT department from Premier and Cabinet. Her examination of those documents led her to believe that a former staff member had been blind copying emails to her Integrity account and also to a Public Service Commission account. Our investigation was able to establish that, whilst those concerns appeared to be well held, they were in fact without substance.

Mr NICHOLLS: On the surface the commissioner was correct to hold those concerns about the blind copying of documents to other accounts?

Mr Barbour: The commissioner did not have the benefit of a forensic computing unit which, of course, we do at the CCC. Her endeavours I think were well intentioned and her concerns at the time were legitimately held.

Mr NICHOLLS: Did those documents you say were 'reconstructed' on those laptops relate to a complaint from the opposition about Labor lobbying activity in Queensland? Were they complaints of that nature?

Mr Barbour: Just to avoid any confusion, I was referring to documents that were reconstructed for the Integrity Commissioner. That was in relation to functional emails of the Integrity Commissioner's office and they numbered in the many thousands. The material that was on the computer—one of which related to these particular matters—was reconstructed. The material that was on that was in fact downloaded to ensure it was maintained at the time it was repurposed. The material on that computer was no different, it would seem, to material that was on other computers to the extent that it contained reference to functional emails but also, in addition to that, it had emails that were the individual officer's account emails. All of those were examined during part of the Workshop investigation by our forensic computing unit, and there was nothing out of the ordinary discovered.

Mr NICHOLLS: You have used a lot of language there about 'reconstructed', 'downloaded', 'repurposed'. You referred to 'functional emails' and those sorts of things. My question goes back fundamentally to: did any of the documents on the laptop that was taken from the Integrity Commissioner's office include a complaint from the opposition about lobbying in Queensland?

Mr Barbour: Not that I am aware.

Mr NICHOLLS: Not that you are aware? Okay. Were investigators surprised that, after almost a year and the investigation that was undertaken, no-one in the Public Service Commission could recall who ordered the laptop to be collected from the Integrity Commissioner and that there was no record of that?

Mr Barbour: There were various accounts provided in relation to who specifically requested at what time the computers to be removed. As the report outlines, two computers were removed at the same time—one for a particular purpose in relation to another investigation and one which relates to the matters that you are currently addressing. It was not deemed surprising that people's recollections well after the event are often slightly confused about the circumstances. What was abundantly clear as a result of the investigation was that those differing views were not in any way significant in terms of the actual matters that were the subject of investigation.

Mr NICHOLLS: The second part of my question was that there was no record of who requested those computers be removed or returned from the Integrity Commissioner's office.

Mr Barbour: No. They were following standard operating procedures at the time for repurposing a computer. Certainly the other computer was obtained at the request of the PSC that was conducting an investigation into other related matters.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Barbour, what were the total legal costs incurred by the CCC to date on the Peter Carne matter, which involved a Supreme Court hearing and a Supreme Court appeal?

Mr Barbour: The total figure for legal costs associated with that matter is \$109,691.26. That figure relates to the costs of both senior and junior counsel in relation to the original Supreme Court review and also the Court of Appeal. Those costs, of course, do not factor in the costs of staff within the CCC that have worked on both of those matters.

Mr NICHOLLS: What would you consider to be the costs in terms of time and effort by the staff of the CCC in briefing and preparing matters for trial and those sorts of things? Do you keep a record of that or an estimate of how much time is being spent on that matter?

Mr Barbour: No, we do not. Clearly the staff involved in that matter would be involved in multiple issues and various responsibilities, so it would be very difficult to attach a particular figure to those.

Mr NICHOLLS: So you do not time-cost or record or anything like that in relation to it?

Mr Barbour: No, we do not.

Mr NICHOLLS: It would be fairly extensive, would it not, if you are briefing senior counsel and junior counsel for a Court of Appeal matter?

Mr Barbour: There have been two matters, as I said—one initially in the Supreme Court and one in the Court of Appeal. Both would require a significant amount of work and preparation, briefing of counsel and so forth.

Mr NICHOLLS: In reference to the investigation of the appointment of then under treasurer Frankie Carroll by then treasurer Jackie Trad, can you tell us why the CCC requested its report be published under the provisions of the Crime and Corruption Act and why it was felt necessary that its publication should be authorised?

Mr Barbour: I am sorry, but I am prevented from discussing any issues in relation to that matter.

Mr NICHOLLS: I have spoken to the Clerk about this. This is similar to the response I got from Mr MacSporran last year. I am not sure that is quite correct under the provisions of the standing orders and the Parliament of Queensland Act. However, I am prepared to say that, if you can give us an explanation as to why you think you might be prevented from doing so, we would be in a position to consider it.

CHAIR: Is there another provision in another piece of legislation that may prevent you from speaking about it?

Mr NICHOLLS: I think that is what I asked.

Mr Barbour: There is a court order in relation to matters associated with that. My advice is that I should honour the terms of that court order, and that is what I propose to do.

Mr NICHOLLS: I would not want to travail across those sorts of areas. In that sense it is important to know the reason. With respect to the report that was prepared into the appointment of under treasurer Frankie Carroll by then treasurer Jackie Trad, has that report been provided to any other party such as the Public Service Commissioner for action and has it led to any changes to the appointment process of senior executives that the CCC is aware of?

Mr Barbour: I repeat my earlier answer: I am not in a position to speak in any way about that matter.

Mr NICHOLLS: As a result of the court order?

Mr Barbour: Correct.

Mr NICHOLLS: Moving on to another more prosaic matter, can you provide an update or resolution of the CCC's case management system, which is the Nexus system, including the outcome of the notice of suspension issues last August and the total cost for the CCC in relation to that matter, which I think on the day of the estimates hearing last year was subject to a suspension notice?

Mr Barbour: Yes. The deployment of a new integrated case management system—as you correctly name, Nexus—was expected to be delivered in early 2021. It was delayed due to the identification of intolerable security vulnerabilities in the vendor's base product as detected by penetration testing that was done by external providers. Not surprisingly, the CCC has a low risk appetite for any risks associated with information security. In late 2020 vulnerabilities were detected within the vendor's associated web forms product and the penetration testing, which was conducted by an independent third party engaged by the CCC, identified 14 security vulnerabilities. On 13 October 2021 the CCC's CEO made a decision to terminate the contract with the vendor. This decision was based on the assessment—

Mr NICHOLLS: I am sorry, what date was that?

Mr Barbour: The decision to terminate was 13 October 2021. The decision was based on the assessment of the vendor's ability to remediate the security issues and their ability to address a number of identified defects. We concluded that the vendor's solution would not be fit for purpose nor achieve

the original scope of the project. We determined that the ongoing issues identified were unlikely to be resolved within a suitable time frame or without further substantial investment. We were not willing to compromise the significant volume of protected information the CCC holds.

In terms of cost, the original contract value was \$708,000; project change requests, \$417,946; the total expected billed commitment, \$1,125,946. The CCC payment to the company was \$771,899, and through settlement negotiations the sum of \$354,000 was not paid.

Mr NICHOLLS: If I understand correctly, the total expected contract cost was over a million dollars. The CCC has paid over \$700,000. The contract has been terminated and the CCC no longer has to pay the balance of \$300,000; is that correct?

Mr Barbour: There have been negotiations to ensure there was a minimal obligation as a result of those decisions.

Mr NICHOLLS: In fact, over \$700,000 has been spent on a system that has not been delivered.

Mr Barbour: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is there a new system underway?

Mr Barbour: The benefit of the work that we did on Nexus was that it provided a lot of sub benefits in terms of other systems, so we were able to extract benefits notwithstanding the difficulty in terms of the delivery of the final product. In addition to that, we are currently working on developing systems within the CCC to ensure that we have appropriate case management.

Mr NICHOLLS: You are doing that in-house, not going outside to get a new system presumably. Has the need changed? What is the change in requirements? You were going outside three years ago but now you are not.

Mr Barbour: At this stage we have not gone outside again.

Mr NICHOLLS: You are taking no legal action in relation to any of the matters raised? Or did you just settle them, as you say, without any further obligation to pay?

Mr Barbour: We have settled them.

Mr NICHOLLS: How is it that, when I look at page 29 of the Service Delivery Statements and your balance sheet, I see your property, plant and equipment is about \$1.6 million less in the estimated actual for 2021-22 and another \$800,000 less for 2022-23 and your intangibles are down by almost \$2 million, yet your current liabilities are up? Does any of that relate to any of the IT systems, particularly the property, plant and equipment? If that is too complex I am happy for you to take that on notice.

Mr Barbour: I think it would be helpful to take that on notice.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am sorry, Minister; if that is a complicated question I ask that Mr Barbour take it on question.

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes, I am happy to take that on notice. If we can get the answer to you before the end of the session, we will do that.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you. Mr Barbour, I have a further matter. Can I ask if the CCC is continuing to investigate matters related to the Queensland Forensic and Scientific Services division of Queensland Health while the commission of inquiry into the Forensic and Scientific Services operation of Queensland Health is undergoing?

Mr Barbour: No, we are not. We have paused our work in relation to that, and we have worked very cooperatively with the commissioner in terms of assisting the commission to the best of our ability.

Mr NICHOLLS: I would like to refer to page 26 of the Service Delivery Statements. Last year the effectiveness measure, which was percentage of targeted criminal entities which were disrupted as a result of the CCC's crime investigations, was discontinued. At that stage the CCC only reached 75 per cent of the 95 per cent target. The measure was dropped. Having not made that measure of 95 per cent and reaching only 75 per cent, the measure was dropped and replaced with a percentage of targeted criminal organisation participants disrupted as a result of CCC intelligence operations. This year the measure fell from a target of 90 to a target of 59 per cent. Having abandoned one target that was not reached and setting a new target, that target has now not been reached by a greater margin than the old one. Why is that?

Mr Barbour: There is no doubt that the targets have been impacted by a range of factors. They are, as you would appreciate, affected by the number of investigations, whether those investigations traverse more than one year. They are also affected by the availability of witnesses. As a result of

COVID and other factors, witness availability and disruption has been significant. The commission is dealing with other entities such as the QPS, and matters that affect them also will affect those measures in terms of the CCC.

Mr NICHOLLS: The note there says that the variance is due to higher than expected staff turnover and COVID-19.

Mr Barbour: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: Why set a target of 90 when you know those things are going to be around? There is no surprise about COVID-19. Surely there is no unusual or difficult aspect in relation to ongoing day-to-day operations. Is the target realistic?

Mr Barbour: I think it is important to set targets that are appropriate and to some degree aspirational in terms of performance setting. We report where we measure those against our targets. For some we are doing extremely well; for others we are doing slightly less well. Importantly, three of the SDS measures exceeded their 2021 targets: adding value to crime investigations exceeded the target; achieving significant outcomes in corruption investigations exceeded the target; and the average cost per assessment of corrupt conduct exceeded the target. I think it is important to always reflect a balanced position. Some may well not reach target. We report on those. Others exceed the target.

Mr NICHOLLS: One final question if I might, Mr Barbour. How much money did the CCC spend in relation to court matters regarding journalist F? These are the hearings in relation to the journalist receiving confidential information.

Mr Barbour: I would have to ask the Attorney's permission to take that on notice.

Ms FENTIMAN: That is fine, Chair.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Attorney.

Ms BOLTON: Minister, prehearing estimates response No. 19 stated that the integrity bodies will work with the implementation task force, central agencies and key stakeholders on the Coaldrake review recommendations. Can you confirm that this committee is a key stakeholder and that the implementation task force will work closely with the committee on the specifics of how the Coaldrake recommendations will be delivered and that appropriate funding will be allocated?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. On 30 June the Premier announced that the government would accept all of the 14 Coaldrake recommendations and work has begun on all of those recommendations. As the Premier said, we are implementing them lock, stock and barrel. David Mackie, the director-general of my department, is leading the integrity reform steering committee and the task force which is overseeing the implementation of recommendations. The task force will also be considering the recommendations from the strategic review of the Integrity Commissioner, the Yearbury report, where they align with Professor Coaldrake's recommendations. They will be coordinating the implementation, as I said. That has been established. They are scaling up the task force.

At this stage the task force is in place for six months, although it may be extended. The task force is currently developing a detailed implementation plan. Stage 1 is to identify those recommendations that can be implemented easily and quickly and, of course, to identify key stakeholders such as the committee. I anticipate that the cost of some recommendations will be absorbed within existing departmental budget—for example, the cost of the Public Interest Disclosure Act review will be absorbed by my department—but others will require additional funding. The task force will be identifying those financial implications for the government to consider.

Essentially, it is early days. They are doing that work. In my view, the committee is a key stakeholder when it comes to these integrity bodies. You do have functions to oversee them and in my view you will be consulted as part of that process.

Ms BOLTON: Minister, the budget provided one-off funding for three years to incorporate the Building Units and Group Titles Act changes. Can you outline how the commissioner is to assist with this as well as the ongoing and growing number of complaints by Queenslanders living in bodies corporate without any additional permanent funding?

Ms FENTIMAN: As I am sure the member for Noosa is experiencing in her electorate, more Queenslanders are now living in community titles schemes, with more than 51,000 community titles schemes now in Queensland and over 500,000 individual lots. The Office of the Commissioner for Body Corporate and Community Management has never been so important, providing valuable dispute resolution and information services to support the self-management of schemes in Queensland. I have to say, despite the increased demand that the office has experienced, the body corporate and community management office have minimised delays. They have reviewed all of their internal processes. They have engaged in targeted community engagement—a very proactive approach—so

that parties can manage issues without the need for dispute resolution. As you have identified, additional funding of more than \$1 million and three full-time employees over three years has been provided. The office has also received additional funding of \$2.45 million and six full-time employees to support the implementation of the amendments to the Building Units and Group Titles Act.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Office of the Commissioner for Body Corporate and Community Management. They achieved a clearance rate of 94 per cent in 2020-21. That increased to 101 per cent in the last financial year. They are getting through the work, despite the increased demand, and they are maintaining a high-quality dispute resolution and information service. We are resourcing them in the short term. They will have some additional dispute resolution because of the amendments we are making to modernise the framework for the Building Units and Group Titles Act, which is quite an outdated act now, and they are doing everything they can internally to make sure they are getting through the work. As I said, a clearance rate of 101 per cent is pretty impressive.

Ms BUSH: Attorney-General, we have seen already this morning the important role that the CCC role plays here in this state. Can you update the committee on the Palaszczuk government's ongoing commitment to the CCC and its important role here in Queensland?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. The Crime and Corruption Commission plays a very important role in reducing public sector corruption and combating major crime. That is why I am proud that this government has a long record of supporting the work of the Crime and Corruption Commission and of strengthening integrity measures in Queensland. We know how important it is that Queenslanders have confidence in the integrity institutions of the state.

I have to say, as I have said on the public record many times now, I have found it quite alarming that the statements made by the LNP opposition, particularly around Operation Workshop, have been so alarming. Despite recommendations from the CCC in that report, I note that no member of the LNP has stood up to withdraw those comments about laptops being seized and offices being raided. The report found, of course, that nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. We have heard that again this morning, with the commissioner saying that nothing out of the ordinary happened here. It is disappointing that those comments have been left to stand, despite a clear recommendation in the CCC report that failure to correct the record on this matter would continue to undermine the public's confidence in the CCC.

I guess we are not surprised, given the record from the opposition when it comes to the CCC. Of course, they sacked the PCCC in the middle of the night on the orders of the then attorney-general, the member for Kawana, the now Deputy Leader of the Opposition. On this side, the government takes its responsibility to resource the CCC very seriously. We have accepted the recommendation from the PCCC for a commission of inquiry. That is being headed by Tony Fitzgerald and supported by Alan Wilson QC. We will await the findings of that commission of inquiry.

Mr HUNT: Attorney-General, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, could you please update the committee on how the government is protecting Queenslanders' great lifestyle by ensuring that our multicultural communities are safe?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. Our multicultural communities make a wonderful contribution to the state. This committee obviously did a huge amount of work when it came to the inquiry around racial vilification. The government is considering those recommendations. We have released a government response. We have committed to criminalising Nazi hate symbols and we are working with the Cohesive Communities Coalition to ensure that our multicultural communities feel like they are protected and that we have strong laws in place. The Human Rights Commission is also doing a review of the Anti-Discrimination Act. We have forwarded those recommendations to the Human Rights Commission and we are looking forward to strengthening our legislative framework to protect our multicultural communities.

Ms BUSH: Attorney-General, can you outline to the committee what action this government has taken to ensure Queenslanders can have confidence in the electoral process and transparency in decision-making?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. Of course, thanks to the Palaszczuk government, Queensland has the strongest political donation laws in Australia, further restricting the influence of big money in our electorate processes. Our new framework, which the LNP opposed, will see public funding increased and new strict political donations limits put in place. The new electoral reforms will increase public funding to \$6 per first preference vote for a registered political party and \$3 per first preference vote for candidates. In return, I am pleased to say that big-money donations will be stamped out, with political donations capped to \$6,000 for candidates of the same party and \$4,000 for a party.

This builds on the campaign expenditure caps that were introduced ahead of the last state election. In fact, we have gone a step further than these reforms require and announced an end to the Queensland business partnership program and the Labor Party's conference observers program. We have done this because we want Queenslanders to have confidence in our processes and in our institutions. The LNP, again, however, has refused to take the same step. The opposition have refused to rule out continuing to host big-money fundraisers and cash-for-access events. Of course, when the opposition were last in power, the member for Broadwater was a cabinet minister. That was when they raised the donation disclosure threshold to \$12,000. They were so fond of that decision that they opposed our attempts to lower the disclosure threshold to \$1,000. In fact, the then shadow attorney-general continued to support big-money donations.

There are more donation reforms proudly passed by this government, all of which were opposed by the LNP, including real-time donation disclosure, which the LNP opposed. Only Labor governments can be trusted to stand up and deliver transparency for Queensland. I am very proud that the Palaszczuk government is continuing that legacy.

Mr HUNT: Can I please call the CCC chairperson? Mr Barbour, I note that the CCC report into the laptop investigation found—

The circumstances in which the laptops were retrieved from the Integrity Commissioner's office were entirely ordinary, and the descriptions of 'raid' and 'seizure' do not reflect the reality of what occurred.

The report went on to say—

A failure to correct the confusion and misinformation around these events may continue to erode public confidence.

What impact could the ongoing failure to correct the record have on public confidence?

Mr Barbour: Thank 4 continue to have confidence in the Public Trustee.

In March this year I tabled a report by the La Trobe University's Living with Disability Research Centre, which evaluated the adoption of the structured decision-making framework in the everyday work of the Public Trustee with its customers and whether its practices had changed. The university found that the Public Trustee had begun to successfully implement a new, more rights based and customer-centric way of working with positive impacts on the Public Trustee's practice.

It is good to see the Customers First Agenda has already delivered significant benefit for clients, and a number of projects from the strategy have been successfully delivered, including: embedding La Trobe University's Professor Christine Bigby's best practice decision-making model across the frontline services of the organisation—they are the first and only Public Trustee to do this; completing the first significant and independent fees and charges review for some decades, resulting in assurances that the Public Trustee's fees have been benchmarked against industry and that they are transparent and appropriate; establishing the independent Customer Advocate office to resolve customer issues on the customer's terms—an Australian first again; establishing the financial independence pathway program, helping customers to reach their goals to regain their financial independence; releasing a suite of resources in language that is easy to understand—these include tools, statements, calculators and ready reckoners to increase transparency and assist customers to better understand services, process fees and charges that might apply to their circumstances; removing the value of the primary residence from any asset test conducted when determining fees, recognising that a person's house or apartment is not just an asset, it is their home; and establishing online and streamlined tools for appointments and complaints to speed up response times and provide customers and their families with easier and faster access to the help that they need.

The establishment of a statutory board—the Public Trustee Advisory and Monitoring Board—will provide further oversight and accountability to the operations of the Public Trustee. Change does not happen overnight and the Public Trustee is making steady progress on improving transparency and accountability across the organisation to ensure vulnerable Queenslanders are supported and protected when they need it most.

Ms BUSH: Attorney-General, can you expand on that around the protection of vulnerable Queenslanders and the role of the Public Trustee there?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. The Public Trustee, as I said, has key processes now in place to ensure that complaints are followed up on the customer's terms, including ensuring that, if there is a review of complaints, there is an independent complaints mechanism now in place. The Public Advocate's report, *Preserving the financial futures of vulnerable Queenslanders: A review of Public Trustee fees, charges and practices*, was tabled on 10 March last year and that report

indicated that many of the Public Trustee's customers appear to receive a high level of service for very little or no cost, while recommending substantial review of the Public Trustee's fees and charges arrangements.

The Public Trustee is committed to delivering services that are valued by the community, and the Palaszczuk government to providing service excellence. As part of that commitment, the Public Trustee has completed a comprehensive review of its fees and charges. The review, which was supported by an external expert contractor, will ensure that fees and charges are transparent, fair, reasonable and reflective of the services provided.

The impact of fees on customers was an important consideration of the review, and it did include broad consultation with stakeholders. The Public Trustee has already taken steps to provide relief for customers and increase the transparency of its fees and charges, including: ensuring that no customer is charged fees representing more than five per cent of their assets, as well as removing the family home, which we have spoken about; no longer charging customers for expert financial advice where that advice only recommends investing in Public Trustee products; and publishing information about fees and charges in an easy-to-read format supported by case studies.

The Public Trustee remains committed to continuing to provide essential services to Queenslanders and ensuring that its fees are fair, reasonable and transparent. That is why the Public Trustee provides generous community service obligation fee rebates for customers experiencing vulnerability—with more than 82 per cent of the Public Trustee's financial management customers receiving these rebates to assist with fees and charges and in some cases legal fees and outlays. It is estimated that \$33.7 million will be provided as community service obligations in the next financial year as a rebate of fees for customers with limited assets. The findings from the review are currently being considered by government. As I have said, it is the first major review into fees and charges in more than two decades and it is therefore appropriate and expected that the government carefully consider the findings and I look forward to tabling the review in due course.

CHAIR: We now go to non-government questions. Deputy Chair?

Mrs GERBER: I will hand over to the member for Clayfield for the next question.

Mr NICHOLLS: Could I ask for the Public Trustee to come forward please. Mr Zhouand, how much has been paid to the consultants to review the Public Trustee's fees and charges over the last 12 months?

Mr Zhouand: I will just get that figure for you now. The total cost to the consultants for the fees and charges review is \$479,500.

Mr NICHOLLS: \$479,500? Okay. As we have just heard from the Attorney and as the answer to question on notice No. 4 in the prehearing questions on notice confirmed, the report into those fees and charges has now been completed. When did you receive the report? When was it given to the government? Given that you act independently of the government, is there any reason you would not release that report immediately?

Mr Zhouand: Our advice is that those matters are appropriate decisions for government rather than the Public Trustee because they do relate to regulated fees. Ultimately, I received that advice in early June. Thereupon, shortly after and after considering it, I did provide it to government.

Mr NICHOLLS: When did you receive the report?

Mr Zhouand: I do not have that exact date before me, but we can get that information.

Mr NICHOLLS: The questions there were: when did you receive the report; and when was it given to the government? Those are two matters you do not have the exact details of in front of you?

Mr Zhouand: I do not have the exact dates. It was sometime in early July from what I can recall. I can get the specific dates. We will aim to provide it, subject to the Attorney-General's authorisation, before this committee hearing ends.

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes, I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Attorney. What did the advice say?

Mr Zhouand: My advice was that these are matters appropriate to be determined by government rather than the Public Trustee per se.

Mr NICHOLLS: Even though you act independently of the government and cannot be directed as to what actions you take?

Mr Zhouand: We did get independent advice and that advice was that we have to refer the matter to government.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is it fair to say that the report recommends very substantial changes to the way that the Public Trustee charges its fees and charges?

Mr Zhouand: Thank you for the question. I am unable to discuss the contents of that report because it is a matter for government and government's consideration.

Mr NICHOLLS: Can I then ask the Attorney-General: given that you have had the report for, let us assume, a month or thereabouts—or I am happy for you to correct me. When did you receive the report?

Ms FENTIMAN: I do not have the exact date, but we are happy to get you the date. Government is considering those recommendations and I will table the report shortly. Of course, it is appropriate that government and the Cabinet Budget Review Committee consider what is the biggest review of fees and charges of the Public Trustee in many decades.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is there any reason the report should not be released publicly?

Ms FENTIMAN: It will be—

Mr NICHOLLS: The government can respond at any time to it and take its time at any time. It is a report that has been a year in the making. It has cost nearly half a million dollars. It responds to allegations of triple charging and overcharging. There is a lot of interest in it. Is there any good reason it just should not be released and then the government can respond?

Ms FENTIMAN: The government is considering the report and I will be tabling it shortly. I have given a commitment to table the report publicly. Government is considering it. Government will have an initial response to the report when we table the report, and that will happen shortly.

Mr NICHOLLS: In those circumstances, are there still people then who are caught up in the old regime who are going to be paying more or paying differently as a result of the report not being released and action not being taken, given that these matters have been going—the Public Advocate report was in March 2021—

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS:—and others there. Is that delay not costing people more and given the revelations that we saw again last night on 7.30 in relation to the past charging practices?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. Of course, the Public Advocate in its report does identify that much has changed in the last few years, even from when the Public Advocate began its review into the Public Trustee. As I have said this morning, the Public Trustee has already taken steps to: provide relief for customers and include the transparency of fees and charges, including removing the family home from eligibility for a community service obligation to ensure that no customer is charged fees more than five per cent of their assets; no longer charge customers for expert financial advice where that advice only recommends investing in Public Trustee products; and publish information about fees and charges in an easy-to-read format supported by case studies.

It is a lengthy report. Government is considering it. As you would well appreciate, it is important that the Cabinet Budget Review Committee also consider that report. Government will be tabling the report shortly, along with an initial response.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Attorney. Mr Zhouand, in relation to the Public Trustee office, in 2021-22 there was a \$12 million increase in budgeted versus actual capital expenditure. Can you explain that? Is it in any way related to the relocation of the Public Trustee from its old offices to its new offices at 410 Ann Street?

Mr Zhouand: Thank you very much for the question. I can confirm that it does relate to the relocation. I am also able to confirm that it is essentially a lease accounting treatment under accounting rules AASB 16. Essentially, it is non-cash flow. No moneys have been spent and potentially no moneys will be spent in terms of those additional sums. It is essentially an option to renew. We are not obliged to exercise the option, but we are obliged to account for it.

Mr NICHOLLS: Right, okay. What was the cost of the office relocation, then, from 440 to 410 Ann Street, a move of some 800 metres?

Mr Zhouand: I can advise that the relocation to 410 was done as an important milestone as part of our transformation journey. It was essentially done to ensure better customer outcomes and for safety reasons as well, as the previous building presented several safety challenges and management issues. The cost of the actual rent of the new premises is approximately \$500 per square metre against the commercial benchmark of \$585 to \$880. In terms—

Mr NICHOLLS: There would have been a cost of moving, of picking everyone up lock, stock and barrel and moving 800 metres up the road?

Mr Zhouand: I will be able to get the aggregate details for you. In terms of actual fit-out cost, it was \$804 per square metre. We have had independent verification that against the commercial standard rates that is a very affordable price, which is normally around \$1,300 to \$1,500.

Mr NICHOLLS: Again, on 15 March this year after the *Four Corners* report into the practices of the Public Trustee, the Attorney made a statement in parliament that there would be reviews into the cases of both Chris Pearson and Peter Ristic, who are both identified in that report, and another review into systems and practices, which the Attorney has mentioned as well. Have these been completed by the reviewers? If not, what is their progress?

Mr Zhouand: Thank you for the question. What I can advise is that, as part of our transformation journey, we did create a customer advocate office. A core function of that independent office, the first in the state trustee sector, is to also have and manage an independent complaint review mechanism. Again, it is a first for the sector.

As part of that process, where individuals are dissatisfied with our internal review mechanisms we give them this external review mechanism. The status of those matters are that two matters are nearing completion and they will be completed within the next three months. I am further advised that, due to one of the customers' individual circumstances, one of the reviews has been delayed. We are continuing to work with that customer and their support network in order to expedite that matter as soon as possible.

Mr NICHOLLS: So you expect both of those reviews within the next three months?

Mr Zhouand: At this stage, yes. Obviously it will depend on the reviewers in terms of any further information.

Mr NICHOLLS: Understood. Have you apologised to the people involved—Mr Ristic and Mr Pearson—directly?

Mr Zhouand: Not as yet directly, no.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you. Attorney-General, have you had any contact with Mr Ristic or Mr Pearson in relation to these matters?

Ms FENTIMAN: No, I have not. Of course, I made a statement in the House and I was very clear that their experience was unacceptable. The contact, quite rightly, has been through the independent process that the Public Trustee has set up to review their cases.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you. Could I ask for the CEO of Legal Aid to come forward, please? Thank you, Ms Davies. Can I take you to the Service Delivery Statements and on page 31, as mentioned by the Attorney-General, there is additional funding provided to Legal Aid Queensland—\$17.2 million for an increase in professional fees and other items. On page 33, the increase in staff for Legal Aid Queensland is up by 10 per cent, so from 575 to 634 staff. Of the \$17.2 million, how much will be spent on internal staff and how much will be spent on external service providers?

Ms Davies: My understanding is that the amount for fees is \$12.145 million. Then, the balance will be split between further grants of aid for external providers and internal providers.

Mr NICHOLLS: Sorry, can you say that again? You are saying that of the \$17.1 million, \$12.1 million is going to the scale of fees?

Ms Davies: Correct.

Mr NICHOLLS: Then, the balance goes to the 316 providers on the list. Where is the rest of the money being allocated?

Ms Davies: So there is an increase in demand and, therefore, there will be additional grants of aid of which approximately 80 per cent will go to external providers and approximately 20 per cent will be for internal staff to meet that additional demand.

Mr NICHOLLS: In terms of the increase in staff, the 59 extra staff that are budgeted for; can you explain what they are going to be doing and where they come from?

Ms Davies: Certainly. The additional staff are in relation to funding that we received in relation to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, in particular to increase duty lawyer services to specialist domestic and family violence courts.

Mr NICHOLLS: Can you give me a breakdown of who is going where?

Ms Davies: So we will have increased staff in Townsville, which will also provide services to Palm Island; increased staff in Mount Isa; increased staff in the Brisbane office; increased staff in the Southport office; and increased staff in the Woodridge office which services Beenleigh.

Mr NICHOLLS: Right. So of the \$17.2 million, that it is predominantly going to increasing the fees payable?

Ms Davies: Correct.

Mr NICHOLLS: That is the \$12 million?

Ms Davies: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: And then the balance is for the increasing demand for services?

Ms Davies: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: And that is approving more applications for Legal Aid—

Ms Davies: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS:—and those sort of things?

Ms Davies: That is right.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is any of it being spent on staff?

Ms Davies: Yes, about 80 per cent will go to external providers, and about 20 per cent will be utilised to increase staffing levels within Legal Aid Queensland. In terms of the positions, there are also positions in relation to funding from the Commonwealth in terms of expanding the family advocacy support service.

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes.

Ms Davies: That is currently operated in Brisbane, Cairns and Townsville. From this year, we will be expanding that with additional monies to the Gold Coast, Toowoomba, Maroochydore, Hervey Bay, Bundaberg, Mackay and Rockhampton.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you. Can I just ask for Mr Barbour to come back again, please? Thank you, Ms Davies. Sorry Mr Barbour, I should have asked you this question earlier. Briefly, is the CCC investigating Mr Andrew Hickman, a member of the board of the QBCC, in relation to potential personal benefits in relation to changes in regulations that have been approved by the QBCC?

Mr Barbour: As you would appreciate, it would be inappropriate for me to discuss any specific matters that are currently or may be currently before the commission. What I can indicate is that in the past year we have received 30 matters, raising complaints regarding the Queensland Building and Construction Commission and/or the board. This is an increase from 16 in the previous year and of those 30 matters; 23 were received from the QBCC. One was notified by another public sector agency for work complaints made directly to the CCC by members of the public, and two were self-generated by the CCC.

Of those 30 matters, one is currently under investigation by the CCC. Nine are currently subject to reviews and monitoring by the CCC, 11 were referred back to the QBCC and eight were deemed to require no further action. Of the nine matters that were selected for monitoring, one has resulted in the dismissal of the subject officer. One matter was finalised managerially, two matters were not substantiated and in one of those matters, there was insufficient evidence for further action. Five matters are ongoing. In terms of the matters that were the subject of monitoring, the CCC were satisfied with the quality of the investigation that had been undertaken by the QBCC.

Mr NICHOLLS: 'Monitoring' is referring back to the QBCC for investigation and then, reporting back to you on the outcome of that investigation?

Mr Barbour: Yes, it depends on what type of monitoring. There are two types. One is particularly close, where we are reviewing reports and providing regular input and the other one is less involved.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you very much.

Mr Barbour: Can I take the opportunity to respond to your questions earlier, which I took on notice in relation to Nexus. The write-off of the Nexus cost is in in intangibles—there is nothing in PPE. Other items in intangibles obviously include things such as amortisation of software, such as cloud infrastructure. The PPE figure is primarily depreciation expenses on hard physical assets. The major item is the depreciation of the Green Square accommodation fit-out.

In relation to the questions on legal costs associated with matters relating to F, I do not have the first instance costs of that litigation available at this stage, however, the commission was successful in relation to that matter. It was subsequently the subject of an appeal by F, and the commission was successful in relation to that matter. The fees for council in relation to the appeal totalled \$51,755. Importantly, costs were awarded in favour of the CCC and we are currently working on cost recovery.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Mr Barbour. If I may, could I ask for the commissioner for liquor licensing, Ms Thomson, to come forward, please. Ms Thomson, could you provide the average length of time and the longest time to date to grant a transfer of a club licence and, separately, the average length of time and the longest length of time to transfer hotel licences? How long are they taking on average and what is the longest one, for both club licences and hotel licences?

Ms Thomson: In relation to liquor licensing, with the Attorney's approval I will have to take on notice the longest period and the shortest.

Ms FENTIMAN: Of course, yes.

Ms Thomson: We will provide that by the end of the session if we possibly can. In terms of our licensing regime, having done some reviews of transfers lately—let me just find it in my notes; I have actually forgotten my glasses!

Mr NICHOLLS: Have you got your phone? You can always take a photo and blow it up!

Ms FENTIMAN: You sound like you are talking from experience.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am talking from a lot of experience!

Ms Thomson: In relation to liquor licensing applications, as the member would be aware, we do have liquor licences and we have gaming licences as well. We have been working very hard over the last couple of years to reduce the regulatory burden for small businesses in relation to liquor transfers. My team has done a lot of work to reduce those over time. As I said before, I will have to take on notice your question around the time durations but, as you know, it is a fairly hot market at the moment. We had approximately 850 transfer applications in the 2021-22 financial year compared to 760 in the year before, so there has been an increase there.

I know that there are some concerns in industry about the time taken to process those transfers. In 2019 we conducted a review to identify some of the general impediments to a transfer. We noted that some of the reasons for those delays are because the applications are incomplete. We have been on a journey of trying to educate applicants to lodge more fulsome submissions. As you would appreciate, we also are very keen to make sure, particularly in gaming applications, that we do our probity checks very well. Most applications for liquor licences are finalised in around two months. With a gaming application, it can be between four and six months.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you. You will find that other material, via the Attorney, and respond when you can?

Ms FENTIMAN: I am happy to take that on notice.

Ms BOLTON: I direct my question to the Electoral Commissioner, please. My question relates to the response to estimates prehearing question on notice No. 20. It said that it is an offence to mislead an elector in relation to the way of voting at an election. However, we are seeing that electors are being misled when they believe that their postal vote applications are going direct to the Electoral Commission when often they are not, due to MPs and political parties not providing clarity around where the reply paid envelope actually goes first. Why is this practice allowed?

Mr Vidgen: There are two issues the member might be referring to, at least in terms of how I interpret that. The provision you referred in terms of misleading voters in relation to how they vote specifically refers to how they complete the ballot paper. Certainly, that is a matter the commission does look at very strictly. If issues come to our knowledge with regard to people being misled with regard to how to fill out the paper incorrectly or illegally, that is something within our jurisdiction.

The other matter to which you refer is the one with regard to postal voting applications. There is a difference in terms of the application of the law, which you referred to, and how we look at the postal vote application process. Obviously this is a matter you have raised a number of times in various forums. I appreciate that it is a matter you have great interest in. I refer to the response from the minister with regard to that question in that there are a number of ways in which voters can apply for a postal vote. I reiterate that the contents of that response are correct and lawful.

In summary, there are two different issues. One relates to the incorrect direction on how you complete the ballot and the other is about the postal vote application process. Currently, political parties are able to access details on the electoral roll via the Electoral Act and they can contact electors in terms of communicating with them, and that is what they do with the postal vote application process.

Ms BOLTON: Again, I will ask—the community and people feel that it is misleading—why the Electoral Commission actually allows it to occur.

Mr Vidgen: At the moment it is a lawful act. It has been that case for some time. It is also common in other jurisdictions. We would encourage electors, and certainly candidates, if they have concerns with regard to how people may apply for a postal vote—our preference is that they come to the commission directly, which they are able to do. In that way they can be assured that the line of sight with regard to the request for a postal vote application is directly to the commission and back. Again, I reiterate: everything that has occurred to this point in time has followed the law. It is a lawful practice which has been followed.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you.

Mr HUNT: With reference to page 19 of the SDS, could the Attorney please outline how the Palaszczuk government is protecting the human rights of all Queenslanders?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. The Palaszczuk government is committed to achieving our vision of a fair and modern Queensland where human rights are respected, protected and promoted. That is why this year's budget includes increased funding of \$6.9 million over four years and \$1.3 million per year ongoing for the Queensland Human Rights Commission, which has seen growing demand on its services during COVID-19.

The funding boost will ensure that we continue to deliver better services for Queensland. The pandemic has required the Palaszczuk government to respond quickly and flexibly to keep Queenslanders safe. This has included a strong health response, which has put the health and safety of Queenslanders first. It is a response that has allowed our economy to grow and it has saved Queenslanders' lives.

The Palaszczuk government's Human Rights Act is an important tool for government agencies when responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Human rights considerations have been and continue to be elevated in the policy and legislation development process as well as in decision-making processes by our agencies who are on the front line of our pandemic response.

The Queensland Human Rights Commission has played a critical role in helping Queenslanders to understand their rights in the context of the global pandemic. I acknowledge Commissioner Scott McDougall and his team at the commission for all of their hard work. The funding boost delivered by the government will directly enable increased capacity of the commission's frontline complaints and inquiries services, particularly in relation to matters of discrimination, so that they can continue to support Queenslanders through the challenges they might experience.

I am very proud of our government's record and commitment to the protection of human rights and to live in a state where we have an independent Human Rights Commissioner and a Human Rights Act for the protection of all Queenslanders. It was the former Goss Labor government that established the former anti-discrimination commission and it was this government that overhauled its operations in line with our Human Rights Act.

Mr HUNT: With reference to page 31 of the SDS, could the Attorney advise the committee how the government is supporting Legal Aid to ensure the efficiency of the legal system?

Ms FENTIMAN: I can, and I thank the member for the question. Legal Aid Queensland plays an integral role in our justice system. It is a service committed to all clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with a disability, people living in rural, regional and remote areas of Queensland and, of course, women experiencing domestic and family violence.

It is so important that every Queenslanders can have access to justice regardless of where they live or their financial situation. That is why it was wonderful to see such a significant increase in funding of \$76.8 million over four years, which will allow the organisation to meet growing demand for core legal services in criminal law, domestic and family violence and child protection. Importantly, this funding will also allow for an increase in the fees paid to private lawyers and specialists like psychiatrists who do Legal Aid work on the organisation's behalf.

I am committed to ensuring that Legal Aid remains appropriately resourced so that preferred suppliers will continue to do this important work. Legal Aid Queensland plays a leading role in providing legal assistance services to people experiencing domestic and family violence. The services range from legal information and publications, legal advice and duty lawyer services through representation in court.

As part of the budget, Legal Aid Queensland is receiving additional funding of \$21.3 million over four years commencing in 2022-23, with \$6.1 million ongoing to support the government's response to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce report Hear her Voice report No. 1, as well as other critical domestic and family violence initiatives. This additional funding allows Legal Aid Queensland to meet the needs of our community in existing locations and support the continued rollout of the specialist domestic and family violence courts in Queensland. I was proud to announce recently that new specialist courts will be established in Cairns and Brisbane to help vulnerable Queenslanders navigate the justice system. This boost in funding means women are supported through the legal system instead of getting lost in it.

Ms BUSH: With reference to page 44 of the SDS, can you inform the committee how the Queensland Family and Child Commission is improving the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. The Queensland Family and Child Commission raises awareness and advocates for children, young people and families and ensures that every Queensland child is loved, respected and has their rights upheld. The QFCC particularly focuses on ensuring young Queenslanders are heard, especially those experiencing inequality, vulnerability or marginalisation.

The Palaszczuk government is proud of the QFCC and the great work its engagement and education programs do. Its Growing Up in Queensland project surveyed young Queenslanders aged 13 to 18 about their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 1,500 young people responded in a four-week period and findings were released in the Living through COVID Report launched in December last year. Young people shared the best and worst parts of lockdowns and provided views about how the government and community leaders can improve communication with them.

In response to the 2018, 2020 and 2021 Growing Up in Queensland survey responses, the QFCC engaged headspace to run a youth focused mental health campaign from May to June of this year. Last year the commission held the Amplify Forum: Solutions for online safety, a virtual event for young people aged 13 to 17 to promote safe digital practices and child rights in the online environment.

The Youth Advisory Council comprises 25 youth advocate positions for people aged between 14 and 25. The council meets with the commissioners six times a year and with the project teams monthly to provide a youth voice and perspective to the commission's work. The Young, Black and Proud scholarship program celebrates the talents and strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who want to excel further in sport, the arts or academically. Families are First is a Queensland Family and Child Commission strength's based initiative which celebrates strong, proud and thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families. 182 Queensland schools and early childhood and community services delivered the commission's parenting engagement initiative, Talking Families.

The QFCC is committed to promoting the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people while being an advocate for the responsibility of families and communities. I want to thank the QFCC, led by commissioners Luke Twyford and Natalie Lewis, for their dedication and hard work.

Ms BUSH: Attorney, with reference to page 19 of the SDS, can you update the committee on work completed to date on the Human Rights Commission's review of the Anti-Discrimination Act?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. The Palaszczuk government is committed to protecting and promoting equality for our diverse communities right across Queensland. It has been over 30 years since the Goss government introduced Queensland's Anti-Discrimination Act and at the time the legislation was groundbreaking, but a lot has happened in three decades and society is a different place. That is why I asked the Queensland Human Rights Commission to undertake a comprehensive review of our anti-discrimination framework and consider whether any reforms are needed to best protect and promote equality, non-discrimination and human rights. I specifically asked the commission to consider whether we should expand the attributes protected under the act, including irrelevant criminal records, historical or expunged homosexual convictions and physical features.

In addition, I have asked the commission to provide options for legally requiring all employers to take positive measures to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation as far as possible in their organisations. The review will also consider the ongoing efforts of the Palaszczuk government to implement recommendations from the Australian Human Rights Commission's Respect@Work sexual harassment national inquiry report.

The actions of Citipointe Christian College at the start of the year highlighted the importance of having anti-discrimination legislation that is modern and in line with international best practice. As I said at the time and have continued to say, the Palaszczuk government expects all students and teachers to be accepted and included by their school and the broader community. We have now received the review from the Queensland Human Rights Commission and we will be considering those recommendations and I will be tabling that report in accordance with statutory time lines very shortly.

Mr Hunt: Attorney, with reference to page 31 of the SDS, could you please outline how Legal Aid is supporting financially disadvantaged people throughout Queensland?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. The Palaszczuk government is proud of Legal Aid Queensland's work and commitment to support vulnerable Queenslanders who need assistance, often in difficult and traumatic situations. The work is challenging, tiring and at times confronting, but it helps ensure that all Queenslanders have access to justice. Legal Aid Queensland delivers a variety of services across various areas of law, including criminal, family, civil law, domestic violence matters, consumer rights, National Disability Insurance Scheme matters, Social Security and Commonwealth benefit matters, anti-discrimination issues and Defence Force and veterans matters. It also provides a range of free preventative and early intervention services such as community legal education, legal information, legal advice and duty lawyer services that are available to all Queenslanders.

For those most vulnerable clients, the client assistance service operated by Legal Aid Queensland provides a client focused service which assists them to access legal help. Importantly, the client assistance service helps in instances where, due to a client's vulnerability, their issue cannot be resolved immediately through regular channels such as calling the Legal Aid Queensland contact centre for assistance or with the help of a customer service officer at a front counter office location.

Legal Aid Queensland continues to deliver quality frontline legal assistance in a cost effective way with a focus on improving services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, responding to the needs of women and children, particularly those at risk of experiencing domestic and family violence, assisting people with a physical disability or impairment, working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and delivering legal assistance services to people affected by natural disasters when they occur, most recently following the flooding and weather events experienced during February this year in South-East Queensland. I would like to acknowledge the continued hard work of Legal Aid Queensland and its commitment to delivering quality and cost-effective legal assistance services to all Queenslanders.

Mr Hunt: With reference to page 31 of the SDS again, and also about Legal Aid, could you please advise the committee what is being done to support vulnerable Queenslanders to ensure that people understand their legal and human rights?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. The Palaszczuk government is proud of Legal Aid Queensland's community legal education program which aims to improve community members' understanding of the law and their legal rights, reduce litigation and costs in the justice system and help community members and stakeholders to understand Legal Aid services and how to access them. The program involves working with priority groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers and networks to improve awareness and access to specialist services like child protection and domestic and family violence.

The organisation provides legal information sessions, webinars and podcasts for community members and community health and education workers on topics like understanding insurance claims, mortgage repossession, buying a car, domestic and family violence, cyberbullying and sexting, consent, discrimination and debt. Additionally, Legal Aid participates in community events such as Homeless Connect and NAIDOC week and provides online legal information as well as fact sheets and resources about different legal topics.

To extend the reach of their work, Legal Aid coordinates and administers the Community Legal Education Collaboration Fund which is funded by my department. Now in its 12th year, the fund resources collaborative initiatives and partnerships between community legal centres, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service, regional legal assistance forums and specialist forums to educate priority communities across Queensland.

In 2022-23 three funded projects will share \$50,000 in grants to deliver community legal education activities and resources to educate community members and support workers. While two of the projects will educate school-aged young people in regional areas about domestic and family violence and respectful relations, the other will educate people about mandatory reporting of child sexual offences in a practical and trauma informed way. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of Legal Aid Queensland's community legal education program and its commitment to delivering quality and cost-effective legal assistance services to vulnerable Queenslanders.

CHAIR: The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 10.45 am with the continued examination of the estimates for the Justice and Attorney-General portfolio area.

Proceedings suspended from 10.30 am to 10.46 am.



CHAIR: The hearing is resumed. The question before the committee is—
That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I understand, Attorney, you may have some answers?

Ms FENTIMAN: Thank you, Chair. In relation to the questions that the Public Trustee took on notice, the Public Trustee received the final draft of the fees and charges review on 22 June this year. The report was provided to government on 28 June. The cost of the total relocation of the Brisbane Public Trustee Office was \$2.08 million. This move included removing Public Trustee staff from risks associated with asbestos in the previous building.

CHAIR: Thank you. I now hand to the deputy chair.

Mrs GERBER: I will hand over to the member for Clayfield for the first question.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Chair and Deputy Chair. Attorney-General, thank you for the information that was relayed back regarding the Public Trustee. Attorney, legal indemnities and assistance form an important part of a minister discharging their ministerial duties. Under the indemnity guidelines, ministers are able to be granted indemnity and legal assistance for investigations, that is, CCC investigations. Did you approve an indemnity and legal assistance for former treasurer Jackie Trad whilst the CCC investigated the appointment for former under treasurer Frankie Carroll or was that indemnity granted by the Premier?

Ms FENTIMAN: As is set out in the indemnity guidelines which form Appendix 6 of the Ministerial Handbook, the indemnity is approved by the Attorney-General and the Premier on advice from the Crown Solicitor as to whether or not the matter falls within the indemnity guidelines. As many previous ministers are granted indemnity, it is based on the advice of the Crown Solicitor that the matter falls within the guidelines.

Mr NICHOLLS: In respect to that, the guidelines provide—

The State will not provide Legal Assistance to a Minister in relation to an Inquiry or Investigation by a police service or other entity with responsibility for investigating offences in relation to the commission of an offence, unless approval in writing has first been obtained from the Premier.

So the Premier provides the approval in relation to matters that potentially involve the commission of an offence, but in other matters the approval is from the Attorney-General in consultation with the Premier. Can you advise: was the approval given by you as Attorney-General or was it given by the Premier?

Ms FENTIMAN: In accordance with the guidelines, the Crown Solicitor provides advice about whether the matter falls within the guidelines and I then provide that advice to the Premier.

Mr NICHOLLS: I appreciate your answer, but the question is: did you provide the approval or did the Premier provide the approval? It is quite important. One relates to the commission of a criminal offence and the other is, for example, appearing before an inquiry that seeks answers in relation to an aspect of public administration where there is no prospect of a criminal offence or an offence being charged.

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes. I acted on advice from the Crown Solicitor that the matter was within the guidelines and I then sought approval from the Premier.

Mr NICHOLLS: So you gave the approval for the legal indemnity to be provided for Ms Trad?

Ms FENTIMAN: No, the Premier and I gave approval in accordance with the guidelines.

Mr NICHOLLS: We are still no clearer whether it was the Premier who gave approval, because the guidelines say—

... unless approval in writing has first been obtained from the Premier. In deciding whether to grant approval the Premier must:

- (a) be satisfied that the Inquiry or Investigation arises from or relates to the proper discharge of the Ministers' duties;
- (b) consider the advice from the Crown Solicitor on the prospects of the Inquiry or Investigation resulting in a conviction; and
- (c) obtain an undertaking from the Minister that the Minister will reimburse the State if the Minister is found guilty of an offence.

Was the indemnity given under those principles, or was it provided in relation to matters under, if you like, part 11 and part 12 of the guidelines in Appendix 6?

Ms FENTIMAN: The matter to which you refer—I assume you are talking about clause 17 of the guidelines, so let's be very clear. That relates to an inquiry or investigation in relation to the commission of an offence. What we are talking about is an indemnity that arose in relation to the former treasurer's role as Treasurer. The Crown Solicitor provides advice about whether or not the matter falls within the guidelines. The Premier and I both signed off on the indemnity, in accordance with the guidelines.

Mr NICHOLLS: If I go to item 19, it states—

The advice of the Crown Solicitor must be sought before a decision is made.

Can you confirm that such advice was obtained and can you advise whether your decision was made in accordance with that advice?

Ms FENTIMAN: The decision in relation to the indemnity was made completely within the guidelines, acting on advice of the Crown Solicitor that the matter fell within the guidelines. I am not sure I can be clearer. The guidelines have been followed at all stages in relation to this matter, based on advice from the Crown Solicitor that the matter fell within the guidelines.

Mr NICHOLLS: Perhaps if I can take it a little further then. Did the Crown Solicitor provide advice to you or the Premier or both of you that it was 'appropriate' to provide the indemnity in the circumstances rather than 'falling within the guidelines', there being a difference? Did the Crown Solicitor say 'it is inappropriate' or 'it is appropriate' to provide the indemnity in the circumstances?

Ms FENTIMAN: The guidelines provide that the advice of the Crown Solicitor must be sought. That advice was sought. The Crown Solicitor's advice was that the matter fell within the guidelines and it was appropriate for indemnity to be provided.

Mr NICHOLLS: Given your close relationship, including holidaying and skiing with the former treasurer in Whistler some years ago, did you think it appropriate that you not make that decision given the potential for a conflict of interest?

Ms FENTIMAN: The guidelines are very clear that it is the role of the Attorney-General to provide that advice to the Premier acting on advice from the Crown Solicitor—independent advice from the Crown Solicitor. That is my role.

Like every other attorney-general before me who has had to provide indemnity for colleagues and friends—the former member for Kawana had to indemnify LNP members. He did not indemnify himself. I note that he had four indemnities so that would have been the cabinet or the premier. But you, member for Clayfield, have been indemnified as have the member for Mudgeeraba, the member for Glass House, the member for Surfers Paradise and former members Tracy Davis, Mark McArdle and Scott Emerson.

It is a very well known part of the role of an attorney-general to act on advice from the Crown Solicitor. These indemnities are given to ministers and previous ministers because of the role that we play and it is appropriate that the Attorney-General seeks advice from the Crown Solicitor, as is outlined in the guidelines. I do my job. That advice was provided to me. I provided that advice to the Premier and that indemnity was given, as is appropriate and as is outlined in the guidelines.

Mr NICHOLLS: I have no argument about the indemnity being provided and I note my indemnities were provided by the former attorney-general in your government. There is no difficulty with that. What I am seeking to be advised of is the terms upon which the indemnity was given because it is a reasonably important matter. It says, for example—

The State will not provide Legal Assistance to a Minister for the purpose of initiating or continuing separate legal proceedings ...

The instance that we are aware of is that the former treasurer has initiated legal proceedings. Is that a different indemnity for which approval was given to meet those legal costs as opposed to an indemnity for the costs of appearing before the inquiry itself?

Ms FENTIMAN: The indemnity was given based on advice from the Crown Solicitor that the matter fell within the guidelines and it was appropriate for indemnity to be granted.

Mr NICHOLLS: So the advice was that it was appropriate for the indemnity to be granted so you acted in accordance with that advice?

Ms FENTIMAN: And provided that to the Premier.

Mr NICHOLLS: Did the Premier give the approval or did you give the approval? Whose signature was on the bottom of the letter saying 'it is approved'?

Ms FENTIMAN: Both of us gave approval in accordance with the guidelines, based on advice from the Crown Solicitor. The Attorney-General and the Premier gave approval for the indemnity to be granted based on the independent advice of the Crown Solicitor, as is outlined in the guidelines that are publicly available, as have been indemnities given to many ministers and former ministers, including yourself.

Mr NICHOLLS: What is the total value of the legal costs for the indemnity provided to the former treasurer to date?

Ms FENTIMAN: Given that the matter is still before the court and not finalised and costs have not been awarded, that figure is not able to be provided at this time. I have said previously that when the matter concludes I am very happy to provide that figure.

Mr NICHOLLS: The indemnity guidelines state—

It is a condition of any Legal Assistance and/or an Indemnity that the Minister will:

- (a) keep the Attorney-General, or the Premier if the matter relates to the commission of an offence, informed ... and
- (b) provide itemised monthly invoices to the Crown Solicitor on a monthly basis, who will certify to the Attorney-General that they are reasonable and may be paid.

Given that this matter has been going for a considerable period, at least since last year, what is the total of the monthly invoices that have been provided to date?

Ms FENTIMAN: As we have previously said, because the matter is ongoing and still before the court and costs have not been awarded, the costs of the matter will be released publicly when the matter is finalised.

Mr NICHOLLS: But that is irrelevant to the issue. The question for this estimates committee for the expenditure of funds from the budget of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General is: what is the cost to date? I am not asking what the total costs will be and I am not asking what the awarded costs will be. I am simply asking, what is the total cost to date? That is something that, under the indemnity guidelines, should be provided on a monthly basis unless the indemnity guidelines are being varied or not complied with.

Ms FENTIMAN: The indemnity guidelines have been complied with and the full costs of the matter will be released when the matter is finalised and a cost assessment has been made.

Mr NICHOLLS: I appreciate the answer has not changed and neither has the question, that is, what is the value of the costs to date, which the department must be aware of if the indemnity guidelines are being complied with? We know, for example, that the costs for the CCC are over \$70,000. We know that the costs for the Carne matter are \$100,000. The CCC matter is not complete yet they can tell us what their costs are. The matter is not complete. Yet with all the resources of your department and the obligations under the indemnity, you either cannot or are refusing to answer a question of the committee.

Ms FENTIMAN: I will give you the same answer. The guidelines have been followed. Everything has been in accordance with the guidelines based on the advice of the Crown Solicitor. The matter is still before the court. Once the matter is finalised and there has been a costs order made, we will provide the costs of this matter.

Mr NICHOLLS: Minister, is it the case that you refusing to answer the question in relation to how much, to date, has been spent in terms of the indemnity provided to Jackie Trad?

Ms FENTIMAN: I am not refusing to answer the question. The matter is ongoing. The matter is still before the court. I have publicly said that when the matter is finalised we will release the costs.

CHAIR: I ask the member to move on. I think the question has been adequately addressed.

Mr KRAUSE: It has not been answered, Chair.

Mr NICHOLLS: In light of the fact that we are not getting an answer to the question, which is an entirely reasonable question and is entirely within the knowledge of the department and must be known given that monthly accounts must be provided, I will move on. Attorney-General, under the guidelines one of the requirements in terms of costs is—

Where the Minister is not represented by the Crown Solicitor, any costs of counsel that exceed the scale rates payable to counsel by Crown Law will not be met by the State, unless the Attorney-General and the Premier have given written consent prior to counsel being retained.

Do former minister Jackie Trad's fees for counsel exceed the scale rates or are they being paid at the scale rates established by Crown law?

Ms FENTIMAN: I do not have that information in front of me, but the full costs of the matter will be released once the matter is finalised.

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes, but that is a different question, which you did not answer before, to the question now—that is, are the scale rates being adhered to or are we paying full bore costs for a Queen's Counsel to be appearing in the Court of Appeal which could be as much as \$12,000 or \$15,000 a day?

Ms FENTIMAN: I again want to make it very clear: with regard to all costs in relation to matters in which an indemnity has been granted, as you have previously said, under clause 23 of the guidelines the Crown Solicitor must certify that any costs are reasonable. So any costs in relation to this matter must be certified by the independent Crown Solicitor that they are reasonable, and this matter falls entirely within the guidelines and the matter is yet to be finalised; it is still before the court. I am not going to come into this place, like some members of your party, and say in the House what would be contempt of court outside the House. I note that the former chief justice made some pretty extraordinary comments on her departure about this matter and about how, in particular, the member for Kawana's statements would, said otherwise, be contempt of court. What I will tell you is that the matter falls within the guidelines. The Crown Solicitor certifies that any costs are reasonable, as is outlined in the guidelines, and when the matter is finalised I will release the costs.

Mr NICHOLLS: All right. I understand all of the above—all of what you said—so the guidelines say—

Where the Minister is not represented by the Crown Solicitor, any costs of counsel that exceed the scale rates payable to counsel by Crown Law will not be met by the State, unless the Attorney-General—

that is you—

and the Premier have given written consent prior to counsel being retained.

Have you given written consent for payments of costs of counsel that exceed the scale rates?

Ms FENTIMAN: As I have said, every cost in this matter must be certified by the Crown Solicitor that they are reasonable. Everything in this matter falls within the guidelines. I am happy to release the full costs in relation to costs for counsel and other matters once the matter is finalised. The matter is before the court.

Mr NICHOLLS: Okay.

CHAIR: I think the question has been adequately answered. I ask you to move on.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Mr Chair. In terms of the indemnity granted, was there one indemnity granted for the entire matter or was there an indemnity granted in relation to the inquiry and then a second application made by Jackie Trad to you as the Attorney-General in order to initiate proceedings to stop the release of the report prepared by the CCC?

Ms FENTIMAN: I would have to check that. I am happy to get back to you on whether or not it was a separate matter that was signed off on.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you.

Ms BOLTON: Minister, regarding the increased funding for domestic and family violence in response to the *Hear her voice* report, relating to pages 7 to 9 of Budget Paper No. 4, can you provide some details around any funding increases for the desperately needed emergency accommodations, improvements to the funding models for our refuges and also support on exit from the refuges, including transitional housing?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I am advised that refuges received over \$36 million in funding for this financial year. That includes \$2.2 million in additional funding through the \$30 million boost for frontline services that we announced last year as well as national partnership funding, which is matched funding between the state and the Commonwealth. The refuges are funded

to provide housing, counselling as well as case management support to women and children who have fled domestic violence. They also have additional funding that can be used for additional staff to provide counselling or specialist children's counselling. They also receive client related brokerage funding, so that can include funding for medical costs, medication, transport, security upgrades or rental assistance to help women transition into safe accommodation. Refuges are able to best determine how they use that additional funding, but it can be used for both, as I said, women's counselling and children's counselling.

I have set up a round table with Minister Enoch and the sector to talk about some of the challenges that women and children face to transition from refuge into affordable housing. There is significant investment in the housing budget, including our \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund, to support vulnerable families. The purpose of the round table, as I said, is to really work with both departments—my department is obviously responsible for the policy and funding of refuges with the housing department—and the primary goal is to ensure that women seeking safety have a streamlined pathway from refuge into affordable housing. I want to thank all of the stakeholders on the round table for working with us. They have provided firsthand examples of how we can better streamline the system for women and find good pathways in terms of long-term safe, secure housing. Of course the Minister for Housing recently announced increased funding for headleasing, so that is about working with people who own investment properties to lease to government so that we can provide that safe accommodation for women and children.

Ms BOLTON: Just to clarify regarding that funding for the clients of refuges, previously it was a single amount that only achieved CPI increases, so from my understanding it did not matter whether there was one child or three; the amount stayed the same. That made it very difficult to provide those counselling services and support services to spread that amount between them, so has that been rectified?

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes. All of our services have received an increase in the last two years as a result of the COVID boost money, but significantly how refuges use that brokerage money, which is that flexible money, is how they can support those people, particularly when they have children staying with them, to provide specialist counselling. A number of the refuges that I visited are using that additional brokerage money to put on children's counsellors, so that money can be used flexibly. If there is demand for children's counselling, they can use that money in that way.

Ms BOLTON: Of that allocation, how much has gone to the Sunshine Coast and Noosa region?

Ms FENTIMAN: I am happy to take that on notice and get you that information.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you.

CHAIR: I now welcome Michael Berkman MP, member for Maiwar, who I understand has a question.

Mr BERKMAN: Thanks very much, Chair. I have a question to the Attorney-General. It was around 15 months ago that you responded to a petition from one of my constituents, Esther, around reforms to better recognise trans and gender-diverse people in the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act. You initially said that the legislation would be introduced in 2021; it is now August 2022. Can we get an indication from you of when we are likely to see that legislation introduced?

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes, absolutely. I thank the member for the question. A key purpose of this review is to ensure that our registration services in Queensland remain relevant, responsive and contemporary, and that includes the consideration of arrangements which will allow trans and gender-diverse people to have their gender identity accurately reflected and affirmed on their birth certificate—I do acknowledge that this is such an important issue to many Queenslanders—and consideration is being given to reforms that have happened in other states. The reforms as considered will bring Queensland into line with pretty much every other jurisdiction.

The reason for the delay is that we have had several round tables now—three. There has been some further feedback from LGBTIQ+ stakeholders and we continue to directly listen to their experiences and recommendations, so we have gone away and done some further work. There was the first round table in October last year and two further round tables this year, the latest one in May. There is now an exposure draft of the bill where we are directly consulting with stakeholders, and I hope to be able to introduce a bill in the next few months—certainly before the end of the year.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you. As a quick point of clarification on that, are you able to confirm at this stage whether that legislation will specifically include provisions to remove surgery requirements? You have already reflected that it will include provisions around updating birth certificate gender markers.

Ms FENTIMAN: Really, we want Queenslanders' lived identity to match their legal identity. Queensland is one of the only jurisdictions in the country that does require people to undergo gender reassignment surgery before changing that on their birth certificates. That is certainly one of the key reforms that we are continuing to consult on for this bill.

Mr BERKMAN: Will the changes be flexible enough to include non-binary people as well?

Ms FENTIMAN: We are doing a lot of consultation on that issue and we are looking at the reforms in other jurisdictions, particularly Victoria and Tasmania. That is the work we are doing now on the draft bill. We are continuing to work with stakeholders on those issues.

CHAIR: We will move to a question from the member for Cooper.

Ms BUSH: Attorney, with reference to page 9 of the SDS, can you update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government is informing Queensland women of their reproductive choices and supporting their access to appropriate supports?

Ms FENTIMAN: In relation to the questions asked by the member for Clayfield, I have just had advice that the fees were in accordance with the guidelines, not above. I am having trouble reading the Crown Solicitor's handwriting so I will get the answer to the second part of the question soon.

In relation to the member for Cooper's question, access to safe abortion services is a fundamental right. The Palaszczuk government is proud of its record to support women's reproductive choices. It was this government of course that decriminalised termination of pregnancy, giving women control over their health. In this year's budget we allocated almost \$1 million to Children by Choice to provide domestic violence counselling. I acknowledge, though, that just because our laws have been changed we still have work to do to ensure that all women have access to reproductive health services.

The Palaszczuk government is also working to ensure our public healthcare system is planning for and meeting the needs of our local communities. I am advised by the health minister that Queensland Health convened a meeting of all hospital and health services recently and they are currently developing an action plan to ensure termination of pregnancy services remain sustainable and accessible.

Sadly, recent events in the United States show us that we can never stop fighting for equality. So many women in the community have raised with me that they are very concerned about what is happening in the United States. In Queensland, the Leader of the Opposition was recently asked if the LNP would review Queensland's abortion laws were they to win government. He was asked six times and six times he dodged the question. In fact, he told Queenslanders to 'look at how I conducted myself in 2018'. I would like to remind Queenslanders, and particularly Queensland women and girls, that the Leader of the Opposition conducted himself in 2018 by voting for abortion to remain in the Criminal Code. He did not even speak on the bill. He would not say why he voted against a woman's right to control her body. I think Queensland women deserve to know.

Queensland women have fought for decades to secure abortion rights and I am very proud that our government decriminalised abortion. Before I entered politics, I was involved with the Centre Against Sexual Violence in my community of Logan. Working with these women and hearing their stories, I saw how much these laws needed reform. One particular case has always stuck with me. A child who came here as a refugee, incredibly vulnerable and still in primary school, was raped and was unable to access the reproductive health services that she needed. I am not sure many people would deny this child access to termination of pregnancy services. However, at the time, of course, it was not decriminalised and many health services would not perform the procedure. Thankfully, the Centre Against Sexual Violence was able to fundraise the several thousand dollars needed to get this young woman into a private clinic.

This is why we need to make sure that our strong laws stay in place and that they are not wound back. Termination of pregnancy should never be criminal. It should be a health decision between a woman and her doctor. Sadly, we know it is usually vulnerable women and victims of sexual violence who are most impacted when termination of pregnancy is criminalised. We are now seeing that occur in America. I urge those opposite to commit to making sure the same does not happen in Queensland. The issue should absolutely be above politics.

Mr HUNT: Attorney, with reference to page 8 of the SDS, could you please outline for the committee how community organisations benefit from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund?

Ms FENTIMAN: Not-for-profit organisations are the heart and soul of Queensland's communities. Our local sporting clubs, PCYCs and community groups play a vital role in each and every community across the state, with many providing support for some of Queensland's most vulnerable.

The Gambling Community Benefit Fund is Queensland's largest one-off grants program and provides an avenue for many community organisations to apply for grants of up to \$35,000 to fund projects that benefit their local community. In February, I was excited to announce the Gambling Community Benefit Fund super round. This super round provided the opportunity for organisations to apply for a higher than usual grant of up to \$100,000 to go towards some of those larger, more significant projects. We received an unprecedented number of applications for this funding round and it was terrific to see so many organisations stepping up and applying.

Last month, I was pleased to announce that more than 500 Queensland organisations were successful in receiving a share of a \$17.7 million under the Gambling Community Benefit Fund super round. It was fantastic to see that out of 522 applicants more than 185 received a grant higher than the usual \$35,000. For 21 of those organisations, they were successful in receiving the maximum grant of \$100,000.

The range of organisations that have benefited have truly been diverse. They include from sporting clubs and community groups right up to housing and homelessness services, domestic and family violence prevention organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services. Some of those to receive funding include Meals on Wheel North West that received \$100,000 to purchase a refrigerated motor vehicle and kitchen equipment. The Womens Centre in Cairns—a specialist domestic violence and homelessness service—received almost \$49,000 to construct a patio area for their centre. The Woorabinda PCYC branch received \$94,000 to upgrade gym facilities and establish a boxing ring for the community to help engage young offenders and highly at-risk young people.

I am also delighted to see funding for the Blackall RSL Sub Branch to construct a memorial statue of First World War nurse Sister Greta Towner. The statue will recognise the often overlooked contribution that Australian women make to the war effort. We know having strong representation of female role models is essential in achieving gender equality and that is why we want to see more real women and girls honoured in our public monuments and statues. When announcing the super round earlier this year I encouraged the community to submit applications to build monuments and statues honouring Queensland women and girls. It is fantastic to see the Blackall RSL Sub Branch receive a grant for this statue.

Since its inception in 1994, the Gambling Community Benefit Fund has received over 64,900 applications and provided over \$1 billion in grants. Our community and not-for-profit organisations do such a great job supporting Queenslanders and it is wonderful to be able to support them through the Gambling Community Benefit Fund.

Ms BUSH: Attorney, in relation to the Queensland government's commitment to keeping communities safe, can you please update the committee on how the government is supporting people in the community to respond to domestic and family violence?

Ms FENTIMAN: Our biggest safety net for women and children experiencing violence and control is our community and everyone playing their part. I am so proud that the Palaszczuk government has partnered with Griffith University's MATE bystander program and Telstra to develop the world-leading smartphone app—Be There. Developed over 18 months in consultation with more than 90 stakeholders from the community, the sector and, sadly, people with firsthand experience of horrific violence and its impact, this app is a powerful tool to support the community to act. Across the state our communities have been devastated by recent tragic events and they want to know more about what role they can play to prevent domestic and family violence. Too often we look back with sadness, anger and despair and we wish we had the tools and the language to identify controlling behaviours.

The Be There app puts power into the hands of friends, family and colleagues, helping them to recognise the signs of violence and control and to find the right way to offer support or intervene. In its first six months alone, the app has been downloaded more than 14,500 times. It is empowering Queenslanders to find the right information, start a conversation and reach out when they sense something might not be okay before it is too late. Griffith University have really led the way in working with bystanders and the community to play their part in tackling domestic and family violence, and I am so proud of this partnership.

As awareness and understanding of coercive and controlling behaviours grow, more and more people want to step up and be active bystanders but they do not know what to say or how to be there. The app is one way to guide them towards appropriate but simple actions they can take in a safe, supportive and respectful way, because we know that even the smallest gestures or actions can be

powerful. Because we know that life gets in the way, for even the most motivated friend, the app can nudge the user with suggested simple and safe actions they could take and help guide the conversation they might have.

The Be There app is a great example of what can be achieved when government, community and corporate sectors work collaboratively and bring their skills to the table to combat domestic and family violence. We look forward to seeing more initiatives involving corporate and community partners. We have released the DFV prevention corporate and community organisation engagement framework and tools to help facilitate further partnerships.

Ms BUSH: Attorney, with reference to page 8 of the SDS, can you please advise the committee how the government's liquor regulation policies are striking the balance between keeping Queenslanders safe and also supporting industry development and economic recovery?

Ms FENTIMAN: Nothing is more important to this government than the safety and wellbeing of Queenslanders. That is why reducing violence in late-night venues has been a commitment of the Palaszczuk government and why we have introduced a raft of measures since 2015.

In May, the government released its final response to the independent evaluation of our tackling alcohol fuelled violence policy. I was honoured to join the Premier, along with Kate and Billy Miller, the siblings of Cole Miller, who was killed in a tragic one-punch attack in Fortitude Valley. They were in the public gallery here at parliament as we released the findings of the evaluation report about the work that has been done since Cole's death.

As a government, we know there is always more to be done to tackle alcohol fuelled violence, but the results from the independent evaluation showed the measures put in place since 2016 are working and making our nightclub precincts safer. It shows that there has been a 49 per cent drop in the monthly number of serious assaults between 3 am and 6 am on Friday and Saturday nights across Queensland. Significantly, there has been a 52 per cent reduction in these assaults in one of the state's most popular night-life precincts—Fortitude Valley.

It was positive to see the average number of monthly ambulance call-outs during these early morning hours reduced by 21 per cent in Surfers Paradise. Importantly, the evaluation found these proactive measures have not had an adverse impact on businesses and there is no evidence violence has shifted to venues outside the safe night precincts.

A number of recommendations from the evaluation have already been implemented. These include allowing the use of pass-outs for patrons who have already had their ID scanned on entry, as well as the reduction of days that mandatory ID scanning is required for venues closing before 1 am.

Some of the accepted recommendations include: work to ensure lists of banned patrons will be available to all venues that operate after midnight; a continued commitment to best practice advertising and communication campaigns aimed at reducing risky alcohol consumption; a comprehensive independent review of alcohol and drug safety education in schools; and continued focus to implement initiatives that promote safe behaviour and attitudes in venues.

Additionally, the government has allocated \$500,000 in 2022-23 to support safety initiatives in safe night precincts such as roving security and taxi marshals to ensure Queenslanders can enjoy a night out without feeling threatened or uncomfortable.

The impacts of COVID-19 on hospitality businesses were significant and far-reaching in terms of trade, staffing and patronage. We are pleased to have been able to strike a balance between reducing alcohol related harm and the need to ease the regulatory burden on hospitality and tourism businesses.

Mr HUNT: Attorney, with reference to page 9 of the SDS, could you please outline how your department is ensuring women and girls across all cultures and backgrounds have access to appropriate services when experiencing violence?

Ms FENTIMAN: The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring all communities can access culturally safe and appropriate services and supports to prevent and respond to domestic and family violence. We know that women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can be at an increased risk of experiencing domestic violence and face additional barriers to reporting violence, seeking support and escaping a violent situation. Barriers include English language proficiency, knowledge and understanding of Queensland's law against domestic and family violence, dependence on a violent spouse for their visa status, isolation from cultural connections, and distrust of police and government authorities based on past trauma.

Our government is making serious strides to improve support for victims and their families in our multicultural communities through building community capacity and making it easier for victim survivors to get the help they need. The Palaszczuk government has invested \$1.59 million to provide specialist

support services for migrant and refugee women and their children who have been affected by domestic and family violence or who have suffered sexual assault. These services provide hands-on supports that include crisis responses, case management counselling and advocacy supports, and providing access to justice and legal services.

In addition, we have committed \$1 million over four years under the Safe and Diverse Communities Grants Program. The grants program is vital to ensuring vulnerable women from diverse backgrounds receive assistance when they need it most. The grants support targeted community-led projects that keep migrant and refugee women safe by educating multicultural communities to recognise, respond to and prevent domestic, family and sexual violence.

Under round 1 of the grants, 14 community organisations were successful. Some of the projects include \$25,000 to the Domestic Violence Action Centre for the production of videos in Kurdish Kurmanji and Arabic languages to address information gaps within the Yazidi community on all forms of domestic and family violence including power and control; \$10,000 to the Ethnic Broadcasting Association of Queensland Ltd to work with the women of the world and Community Broadcasting Association of Australia and other community partners to produce digital presentations to raise awareness of domestic, family and sexual violence; and \$25,000 to the Bengal Foundation to work with Imams and other leaders within the Muslim community across Queensland to improve their capacity to recognise the signs and respond appropriately to domestic, family and sexual violence.

At the last election, the Palaszczuk government committed an additional \$6 million over four years to support the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence in multicultural communities and inform people on how to recognise and respond to domestic violence. We remain committed to listening to the advice of cultural leaders and service providers and support community driven initiatives recommended by them.

There are also information resources now available in 30 languages. I encourage all members to order these resources in languages relevant to your communities to assist your constituents. We are absolutely determined that all women in Queensland can access support when impacted by violence and that all communities can raise awareness and prevent violence.

Mr HUNT: That you for that response, Attorney. That was very encouraging. With reference to page 4 of the SDS, could you please outline what investments have been undertaken to modernise Queensland's courts?

Ms FENTIMAN: The Palaszczuk government is delivering an historic investment to modernise our courts and transform how they operate. In fact, this commitment has been described by the Queensland Law Society as a 'bumper justice budget'.

Our courts play a crucial role in every community across the state. In a digital age it is vital for our courts to keep pace with the rapid advances in technology. To ensure our justice system can better meet the growing demand, we must continue to invest in the digital space to improve our courts' capacity to manage the important work they do.

That is why the Palaszczuk government is providing \$246.8 million over five years to modernise our courts. This will see upgrades to our courthouses and will also deliver much needed technological improvements through our five-year ICT strategy. That will provide for e-files and e-filing, enabling users to interact virtually with the courts where appropriate.

The highlights of this funding include: \$94.3 million over five years to digitise Queensland courts and QCAT and support infrastructure in courts; \$59.2 million for infrastructure and structural works to Queensland courthouses to improve efficiency, safety and sustainability of the buildings; in addition, \$49.1 million for works at the Toowoomba, Cairns, Brisbane, Rockhampton, Maroochydore, Caboolture, Mackay and Ipswich courthouses to improve safety for victims of family and domestic violence attending court; and \$250,000 in 2022-23 to develop and implement training for court staff about the nature and impact of domestic and family violence as part of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce *Hear her voice* report.

It is so important that every Queenslanders can have access to justice, especially our vulnerable Queenslanders. That is why the budget includes an additional \$76.8 million for Legal Aid Queensland over four years to increase essential legal services such as free access to duty lawyers, dispute resolution and general legal advice. This commitment will modernise both the physical and digital infrastructure of our courts and will increase access to justice for all Queenslanders.

CHAIR: I will hand over to the deputy chair.

Mrs GERBER: Thank you, Chair. I will hand over for the first question to the member for Clayfield.

Mr NICHOLLS: Attorney, the action by Jackie Trad is a private action aimed at keeping secret a CCC report into a matter of important public administration that would normally be released. Why are taxpayers funding Jackie Trad's efforts to keep the report secret?

Ms FENTIMAN: The matter is before the court. I am not going to discuss a matter in here that would otherwise be contempt of court. I bring the member's attention once again to the comments of the former chief justice, who made extraordinary comments about this matter being raised in the House—

Mr NICHOLLS: But it is not contempt of court and the former chief justice made no comments in relation to any member of parliament.

CHAIR: Member for Clayfield, allow the Attorney-General to finish her answer.

Ms FENTIMAN: As the former chief justice said—and as you would well know, it is very rare for these comments to be made—in relation to the member for Kawana's comments in the House—

Mr NICHOLLS: That is not right. She did not refer to the member for Kawana.

Ms FENTIMAN: No. What she said was that information was—

Mr NICHOLLS: So what you said was not right. She was not referring to the member for Kawana.

Ms FENTIMAN: The former chief justice did not refer to the member for Kawana; I am. The member for Kawana came into the House and talked about a matter that would otherwise be contempt of court. On 17 March the former chief justice said—

... information in relation to the existence of the proceeding and the identity of the applicant have already been disseminated ... Consequently, the maintaining of the order in its existing form has been rendered futile.

It would be premature to assume that the original disclosure of the existence of the proceeding and the name of the applicant was a deliberate breach of the order, but the result has been to defeat its effect ...

If the individual or individuals who disclosed that information did so in wilful breach of the order, questions of contempt of court would be raised.

It is extraordinary for a former chief justice to make statements such as that. I would again remind the member for Clayfield that the matter is before the court and I will not be talking about the matter in here.

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes, but the suppression order has been lifted, as the former chief justice has said. The matter is not sub judice because it is a civil matter. You have granted indemnity costs for legal costs for a private action—

Ms FENTIMAN: I am happy to talk about that indemnity.

Mr NICHOLLS: That is the question. Why is the taxpayer funding an action by Jackie Trad to keep a report secret?

Ms FENTIMAN: Advice has been given by the Crown Solicitor that the matter falls within the guidelines and the former treasurer has been granted an indemnity in accordance with the guidelines. In relation to your previous question, there were two applications made in relation to indemnity. As I have said, the matter in relation to the CCC was signed off by myself in accordance with advice from the Crown Solicitor and subsequently the Premier. There were collateral proceedings, to which you have also referred, approved by myself. Both of these were made on the recommendation of the Crown Solicitor in accordance with the guidelines.

Mr NICHOLLS: If I can be clear then, Attorney, the first indemnity was granted by you in accordance with the advice you received. That is your answer.

Ms FENTIMAN: Myself and the Premier.

Mr NICHOLLS: Yourself and the Premier.

Ms FENTIMAN: Collateral proceedings were approved by myself.

Mr NICHOLLS: I will come to that. In relation to the inquiry that the CCC ran, that is one section: an inquiry and an indemnity.

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: Now a second indemnity has been granted, so that must relate to the action commenced by Jackie Trad to suppress the report.

Ms FENTIMAN: That is the collateral proceeding. In accordance with the Crown Solicitor's advice, I approved that it was in accordance with the indemnity guidelines.

Mr NICHOLLS: On what basis did you consider it appropriate to fund a private legal action by Jackie Trad to keep a CCC report secret? Because it was your decision; not advice from Crown Law. You had to make that decision.

Ms FENTIMAN: No. I based that on advice from the Crown Solicitor. At every point in this matter—for the sake of repetition—I have made decisions in accordance with advice provided by the Crown Solicitor in accordance with indemnity guidelines. As we have well canvassed, previous attorneys-general have given indemnities for their colleagues. I think the member for Kawana had to give an indemnity to a number of his colleagues, including the member for Mudgeeraba, the member for Surfers Paradise and the member for Caloundra. That is the role of the Attorney-General.

I am saying in relation to this matter that—and I cannot be more clear—at every stage it has been based on advice from the Crown Solicitor and that the matter fell within the guidelines or that the costs were reasonable and in accordance with the guidelines.

Mr NICHOLLS: In all of those previous matters the indemnity was used as a shield. It was not used as a sword. In this instance it is being used as a sword to prevent the release of a report.

Ms FENTIMAN: A matter is either within the guidelines or it is not. The Crown Solicitor is the appropriate person—an independent person—to provide that advice, and that is available to all members of the House on both sides of the House.

Mr NICHOLLS: The Crown Solicitor's advice to you was to approve the request for assistance made by Ms Trad.

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes, as I have previously stated.

Mr NICHOLLS: His clear advice to you was to approve it.

Ms FENTIMAN: The clear advice was that it was in the guidelines and should be approved, yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: So it should be approved.

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes.

CHAIR: Can I ask the member for Clayfield to move on. These questions have been canvassed and it is becoming repetitious.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Chair, the right to ask questions is my right, not yours.

CHAIR: That is a reflection on the chair.

Mr NICHOLLS: No. It is a statement of fact.

CHAIR: No. It is a reflection on the chair. Can I remind the member that you here at the invitation of the committee, and that invitation can be withdrawn at any time.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Chair, that would then be a reflection on the ability of the government to be held to account.

CHAIR: No.

Mr NICHOLLS: My ability to ask questions is—

CHAIR: Member for Clayfield, ask your next question, please.

Mr NICHOLLS: I thank you for that, Attorney. Can I next turn to a turn to a question in relation to funding for Court Network volunteers. Can I ask why you have cut funding to the Court Network volunteer program for victim support here in Queensland?

Ms FENTIMAN: I reject the premise of the question. The funding has not been cut. There was a tender process for this funding and Court Network was, unfortunately, unsuccessful in its tender for this work. However, Court Network continues to deliver court reception services at Southport, Beenleigh, Brisbane and Ipswich. Both my office and the director-general have recently met with Court Network. We are continuing to work closely with them to explore opportunities for further funding.

Mr NICHOLLS: This is a low-cost service, fewer than \$600,000 a year. It is a rounding error in a state budget of \$60 billion plus. At its peak there were 10 staff and 200 volunteers on the book who provided services to people unfamiliar with court process and the difficulties of it. Why on earth would it not be appropriate to fund the Court Network for such a small amount of money? Isn't it just meanness?

Ms FENTIMAN: No. As a former treasurer, you would understand that when there is a tender process for funding all organisations may apply. From 1 July this year Protect All Children Today, PACT, a very well-known not-for-profit service, will deliver trauma-informed specialist support for children, youth and adult victims of crime at our courts. As I said, unfortunately Court Network was unsuccessful.

It is procurement best practice to ensure that these contracts do go to tender; however, I have met with Court Network. I have been down to see the work they do. I agree that their volunteers do wonderful work. The director-general and I are continuing to work with them to find funding opportunities in the future.

Mr NICHOLLS: They have even said they will do the work for free, and they cannot do that—

Ms FENTIMAN: They have not said that, member for Clayfield.

Mr NICHOLLS: They cannot do the work without insurance, but they are not covered by insurance.

Ms FENTIMAN: That is not the case. They certainly have requested funding—

Mr NICHOLLS: They are volunteers.

Ms FENTIMAN: Some of them are volunteers, but they also have people who are paid who do a lot of the work and train and manage the volunteers. You do not just let volunteers loose in the courthouse. You have people who supervise them.

Mr NICHOLLS: These are already trained volunteers.

Ms FENTIMAN: Some of them, but many require ongoing training. It is an important job. As I have said, the program went to tender. They were unsuccessful. We continue to work with them. The director-general met with them recently. Director-General, do you have anything to add?

Mr Mackie: As the Attorney said, and as you said, it is a low-cost, high-value service. It was very sad that through a tender process we could not continue with them. Protect All Children Today is taking up some of that space. I have met with them. I think the issue to which you refer about them volunteering to do it for free was not under the auspices of Court Network. It was more a smaller group of volunteers within that who were willing to do that. With that come a whole lot of other challenges around who is going to do the scheduling, picking up insurance, as you said, provide ongoing training et cetera. It is a great organisation. As the Attorney said, I will continue to work with them to make sure they are aware of any opportunities that come out of any of the funding pools that we have.

Mr NICHOLLS: Here's hoping.

CHAIR: I now hand over to Amanda Camm, the member for Whitsunday.

Ms CAMM: Attorney, in the interests of a robust criminal justice system and in review of the recent budget papers, can you confirm which department is funding the commission of inquiry into the forensic lab? Can you confirm the line in the budget and the value?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. It is not my department. I am advised it is the Department of Health and you would have to ask the minister in relation to the budget statement.

Ms CAMM: Thank you. Attorney, when concerns were being publicly released about the forensic lab and the impact particularly on sexual assault victims in the criminal justice system, when were you first briefed on the allegation of process failures?

Ms FENTIMAN: I would have to check that. Certainly, it did come up in parliament last year and my office sought a briefing in relation to the service. Obviously, it was something that the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce looked at in depth and a number of their recommendations relate to the service as well. I assume when the matter was raised late last year was when I was first briefed.

Ms CAMM: Subsequently, did you raise the matter with the health minister?

Ms FENTIMAN: On many occasions, and with her office. My office has met with the health minister's office on several occasions about this matter.

Ms CAMM: With regard to your continued advocacy as the Minister for Women, the *Hear her voice* report raised historic practice by Queensland Health of charging women without Medicare cards for rape kits in Queensland. A spokesperson from your office said that the charging of rape kits and forensic sexual assault medical treatments was a matter for Queensland Health. When did you first become aware of this practice?

Ms FENTIMAN: Again, I thank the member for the question. It is a matter for Queensland Health. I understand it was raised in the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, and when I received the report was when I was aware of it. Obviously, Queensland Health very quickly did some work to ensure that no longer happens, in accordance with the task force's report.

Ms CAMM: As the Minister for Women who takes carriage of women's policy, do you see the response of abdicating the responsibility of policy to the health minister as appropriate—when women across Queensland, through the errors of Queensland Health, had been subjected to challenges when it comes to being able to prosecute their case in the criminal justice system that you also hold carriage of?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. Of course I take my role as Minister for Women and advocating for women's safety very seriously. That is why we established the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, led by the Hon. Margaret McMurdo, which heard in their second report from hundreds of women who had experienced sexual assault. You also know my background as a former volunteer at the Centre Against Sexual Violence for over a decade. So, yes, I take these matters very seriously.

It was first brought to my attention through the task force report that rape kits were not available for people without a Medicare card. We very quickly, internally within government, did what we could to ensure that was no longer the case, and Queensland Health very quickly fixed that, in accordance with the task force recommendations. So, yes, I take my responsibility very seriously and I am very proud that the government stood up the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce report 1. We are criminalising coercive control. We have an historic \$363 million reform package.

You mentioned the criminal justice system. Every part of the criminal justice system is under reform as a result of the task force report—everything from co-responder models to domestic and family violence services, working with police and how the DPP prosecutes these cases. The second report had 188 recommendations—specialist court lists, law reform. It is the biggest reform agenda in the nation. So, yes, I take my role very seriously. I was very pleased that the Minister for Health and Queensland Health, as soon as it was brought to their attention via the task force, made a decision within a week to stop charging women who did not have access to Medicare for rape kits, as was appropriate to do so.

Ms CAMM: Minister, when did you receive a copy of that report prior to its public release or tabling in the House?

Ms FENTIMAN: I received the report and tabled it the same day, as I said I would.

Ms CAMM: So it still took a week before Queensland Health responded to that report. Are you saying that neither you nor your office picked up the phone to the Minister for Health to alert them to this practice that was occurring in Queensland Health?

Ms FENTIMAN: Queensland Health were aware of the report. I am not the Minister for Health but what I can say is that Queensland Health were aware of that recommendation. We received the report on the Friday with 188 recommendations. Within a week, Queensland Health across all their HHSs had changed their policy, as they should.

CHAIR: I ask the member to move on. The question has been adequately addressed.

Ms CAMM: Thank you, Chair. I will move on. With regard to another key recommendation out of the report, has the minister spoken with her colleague the Minister for Health with regard to the standard of DNA testing kits in Queensland and the recommendations around those testing kits?

Ms FENTIMAN: The Minister for Health and I have had a number of conversations about the commission of inquiry and the previous concerns that were raised in relation to the forensic services unit. There is now a commission of inquiry that has been stood up, with Walter Sofronoff leading it. I cannot think of a better, more experienced person who, as a former Court of Appeal president, will very quickly understand any implications from his review on the criminal justice system. I think we are now well placed, and Queenslanders can have absolute confidence in the commissioner and the commission of inquiry to ensure that Queensland has the very highest standards when it comes to DNA testing.

Ms CAMM: Attorney, I acknowledge the increased funding to DVConnect that I know will be welcomed by them and women across our state today. One matter that the member for Noosa raised is the significant increase in women calling that hotline requiring emergency refuge or transitional accommodation. You did outline working with the housing minister. Given some of the figures that you quoted previously were around capital investment, can you expand on the priority for operational investment when it comes to refuge or transitional emergency accommodation across the state?

Ms FENTIMAN: Thank you for the question. Our government has created eight new refuges since we have been in government—the first government funded refuges to be built in the state for over 20 years. We continue to work with our refuges to make sure that women do have access to safe places

when they are fleeing domestic and family violence. We are continuing, as I said, to work with the Minister for Housing with our DV housing round table. Obviously, the pandemic has seen a strong wave in migration, and housing availability has become very difficult.

We are also working with Housing on making sure that DV victims are prioritised for social and affordable housing. There are a range of programs underway to support women into long-term, safe accommodation, such as flexible assistance packages, Helping Hand Headlease, which we talked about, and also the affordable housing for women experiencing DV initiative. Through the national partnership, the affordable housing initiative is being continued and expanded. There is a new crisis hub accommodation model that is being trialled: to support providing crisis accommodation co-located with services; particularly to provide support to complex and diverse needs of women who are experiencing homelessness as a result of domestic, family and sexual violence; and for the continuation of a capability building service to support the sector to advocate regarding tenancy issues. This initiative is intended to support specialist domestic and family violence workers to understand and utilise appropriate pathways to long-term sustainable housing for clients.

I mentioned earlier the \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund, which has been set up to provide support for vulnerable Queenslanders. The other thing I would say in relation to housing is that we have had a real focus on working with our magistrates on ouster orders when women come forward for a domestic violence order. We are making it easier for women, where it is safe for them, to stay in their home. Obviously, if it is safe to do so and the risk is not too high, having women and children remain in their community is the best option. They are connected to schools, their support networks and their friends.

Since 2012 we have seen an increase in domestic violence ouster orders from 34.5 per cent to over 50 per cent. I think that is also partly to do with the additional brokerage funds that we have given to services to enable security upgrades so that women do feel secure as well as other brokerage funds to enable women to safely remain in their home. I am really pleased to see that now over 50 per cent of DVOs have an ouster order in them. Where it is safe to do so, it makes sense for women to stay in the home. Of course, it is not appropriate in every circumstance, particularly where there is high risk.

Ms CAMM: Chair, that points me to a question of the Attorney with regard to prevention programs. In the prehearing question on notice No. 18, from what I could read there was a refusal to give detail of prevention programs operating in Queensland. We know from the *Hear her voice* report 1 that services and supports for perpetrators are seriously deficient across the state where there are significant gaps in availability and access to perpetrator programs to keep victims safe. Minister, are you hiding the fact that there is little or no accessible prevention programs across the state?

CHAIR: I remind the member—there were a number of imputations in that question—just to be careful.

Ms FENTIMAN: I am happy to answer the question, Chair. In the question on notice the member asked about prevention programs, not perpetrator programs. I took the question to be about prevention programs that the government runs educating people about what are respectful relationships and how to prevent domestic and family violence in the community. I am more than happy to go through in some detail the investment we are making in perpetrator programs and men's behavioural change programs.

Since July 2016 the government has increased funding for perpetrator programs and men's services by 178 per cent. I want to say it was coming off a low base, but what we have learnt in the past several years, particularly since the *Not now, not ever* report, is that we have to work with perpetrators. We have updated perpetrator intervention service requirements. There are now obviously national frameworks in place. Of course, it was a key recommendation in the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce to increase funding for perpetrator programs. That is why as part of our \$363 million, \$25 million is set aside for perpetrator programs and men's behavioural change programs.

Investment was increased in the last financial year by \$8.9 million and that funding went to 26 organisations. An amount of \$2.1 million was allocated in 2021-22 for services for men in remote Aboriginal communities and \$6.3 million was provided to DVConnect in the last financial year to provide telephone helplines and support people using or experiencing domestic and family violence including the dedicated men's line.

We also have been trialling and evaluating innovative responses to hold perpetrators accountable for their abusive behaviours. This has included the online perpetrator program trial delivered by the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre on the Gold Coast and the family pathways model delivered by the Brisbane Domestic Violence Service. I have had the privilege to sit in on the family pathways model. It seeks to reduce domestic and family violence that is perpetrated by young

men against their mothers. It is actually about intervening even earlier when young men start to exhibit aggressive, non-respectful behaviour towards women, in particular their mother. Before they even get to an intimate partner relationship we are now trialling programs that are working with young men to reduce the risk of young people perpetrating domestic and family violence. Both initiatives have been evaluated independently by Griffith University and are showing very promising results.

We have also committed to developing a standalone, system-wide strategy for responding to perpetrators of domestic and family violence in response to recommendation 9 of the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board. The system-wide strategy will inform the design and establishment of a statewide network of perpetrator intervention programs which will include an intersectional approach that meets the needs of people with a disability, young people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and, of course, people in urban, rural, regional and remote locations. That, again, was a recommendation from the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce.

I am actually really proud of how much work has been happening in this space in terms of the huge investment since 2016, but also the work that has been done in skilling up the workforce. The other challenge that services have in this space is finding skilled facilitators to work with men. It is a really challenging space and you have to get it right because you have to hold these men accountable. Under best practice guidelines we require services to ensure there is a woman facilitator in the room as well. We have also funded WorkUp, which is doing great work with the sector to increase training and capacity for the sector to roll out of more of these programs now that we have even more funding.

Ms CAMM: Thank you, Minister. You talked about the great programs that are happening with young men in particular and their mothers. It has been reported in regard to refuge that there are some inhibitors, particularly for mothers with children and male boys of a certain age, that they cannot access refuge. Is it a policy of this government that mothers with sons of a certain age cannot access refuge?

Ms FENTIMAN: It depends on the refuge. Because of the way they are designed, some refuges do not accept women with teenage sons. However, more modern refuges, the new refuges we have built, are designed in such a way that they have separate facilities where women with sons can be accommodated.

Ms CAMM: Attorney, you highlighted women's rights to health and access. It has been reported, particularly by sexual assault services, that some women have to travel over 1,200 kilometres to access services, whether it be abortion clinics or other health services in rural and regional Queensland. As an advocate for that option for women, can you please explain why women in regional, rural and remote Queensland cannot access such a service that you are such a strong advocate for?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. Again, it is not something that my department funds. What I will say is that, as I said before in relation to a question from the member for Cooper, I do understand that the health minister and Queensland Health have recently convened a round table of all the HHSs to make sure there is access for women no matter where they live, and that work is ongoing. There is a strong commitment from government to make sure those services are available in every community.

Ms CAMM: You are advocating for a service that currently is not available in the majority of communities in rural and regional Queensland?

Ms FENTIMAN: I do not have in front of me, because I am not the Minister for Health, where those services are being provided. I have seen—

Ms CAMM: But you are promoting those services all across the state.

CHAIR: Excuse me. Member for Whitsunday, do not interrupt the Attorney when she is answering a question. That is the first thing. The other thing I want to raise with you is this is not within her portfolio.

Ms CAMM: Thank you, Chair. I note that. I just note also that the Attorney does seem to be the government's spokesperson on this matter—

CHAIR: The next suggestion, member for Whitsunday, is not to argue with me.

Ms FENTIMAN: I do know that the health minister is doing an enormous amount of work bringing the HHSs together to look at these issues. I have recently met with MSI and I regularly meet with Children by Choice on these issues. As you have said, I am very passionate about it and I will continue to work with my colleague to make sure women can access these services.

Ms CAMM: Chair, I will address some questions regarding the report and recommendations by the Hon. Margaret McMurdo. Attorney, has the government appointed an implementation supervisor? If not, what is the time frame expected for that appointment?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. Off the top of my head—and I have recently been briefed about it—that recruitment is underway. I am happy to get you a time line before the end of the session if we can.

Ms CAMM: Thank you. I appreciate that. Subsequently, does the government have a time frame or expectation around the five-year strategic investment plan for domestic and family violence services?

Ms FENTIMAN: Again, I am happy to get you that information before the end of the session.

Ms CAMM: Thank you. I appreciate that you will take that question on notice.

Ms BATES: Director-General, how many small to medium enterprise companies owned by women have received contracts with the Queensland government?

Mr Mackie: Thank you for the question, member. If it is okay with the Attorney, we will have to take it on notice to get those figures if we can.

Ms FENTIMAN: That is a question which is more appropriately put to the Minister for Public Works. It is a procurement question. It is not something that sits within the knowledge of my director-general or my agency, so I would direct the member to the Minister for Public Works.

Ms BATES: Can I clarify that you, as the Minister for Women, do not know if there are any contracts given to women here in Queensland under the procurement process for all of Queensland government?

Ms FENTIMAN: I do not have that information with me. It is also not something I can take on notice because it does not sit with my department. I refer the member to the Minister for Public Works.

Ms BATES: Thank you. Attorney-General, how many court mandated DV trackers on high-risk offenders have been ordered by the courts, and how many offenders have been fitted?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I am happy to take that on notice.

Ms BATES: Thank you. Mr Chair, the minister is taking that on notice.

Ms FENTIMAN: I am taking a question on notice from the member for Mudgeeraba about how many DV offenders have been fitted with trackers. Again, I am pretty sure the answer is going to be that it does not sit with me. I am sure that it will sit with the Minister for Police. If you hang around for the next session, you might have another opportunity to ask that question.

Ms BATES: Certainly. But I assume that if they are court ordered and they are fitted there must be some reporting mechanism back to the Attorney-General.

Ms FENTIMAN: Some are court ordered and some are done by probation and parole and Corrective Services. We will see what we can do about that one.

Ms BATES: Thank you, Minister. Attorney-General, earlier you mentioned ouster provisions. How many ouster provisions have been simultaneously ordered with personal protection notices so that women do not have to wait for a DVO?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. Again, that would sit with police, but we are happy to get you whatever information we have. Police protection notices are issued by police. I would ask the Minister for Police, but I will see what we can get you.

Ms BATES: Thank you.

Ms CAMM: Attorney, on page 594 of *Hear her voice* there are details of women—I recognise that this may not fall under your portfolio but I think that, as you are the Minister for Women, it does—in safety units at Townsville correctional facility being unable to access basics such as tampons and being forced to use sanitary pads with paper underwear or sometimes no underwear at all. These women are being subjected to what is, I think, a lack of dignity. In your role as the advocate for women, what has been your advocacy to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services with regard to this practice?

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes, I am an advocate for women, but the role of the committee here today is to ask questions about the budget of my department. The task force report, of course, sits within my department. I was just as appalled as you, I am sure, to read some of the stories in the task force report. Again, I want to thank all of the women who came forward to shine a light on these issues so that we can reform the system. I have had a number of conversations with my colleague the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and, of course, we are considering all of the recommendations in the second report and pulling together a government response.

Ms CAMM: Attorney, have you costed all of the recommended actions from the *Hear her voice* report 1, and do you expect that \$363 million will cover all of those recommendations as per the announcement in the budget?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. The government provided its response, which accepted in principle all of the recommendations from report 1. There were 89 recommendations, and our funding package of \$363 million will be going to the implementation of those recommendations. That is everything from more funding for our courts, to upgrade our courthouses, to more funding to ensure we can educate the community around coercive control and train our first responders. Our response to the *Hear her voice* report 1 was a \$363 million funding package. It is an historic package. I note that we had in the gallery families of victims of domestic and family violence, and it was resoundingly welcomed by the sector.

Ms CAMM: To confirm, you believe that figure will cover all of the recommendations?

Ms FENTIMAN: That is the funding to support implementation. Along the way things may change but, at this stage, the \$363 million investment from government—an historic funding package to support the implementation of all 89 recommendations—is what we believe we need to implement the report. Of course, as I said, during implementation things may change. There are also a number of recommendations about further work to be done, so at that stage there may be further funding implications. It is a pretty significant funding package and I am very proud. I thank my colleagues for their support in implementing this historic review.

Ms CAMM: Attorney, can you confirm a time frame in regard to the introduction of legislation around recommendations 52 to 60 and 62 to 66 in report 1?

Ms FENTIMAN: I do not have the list of the recommendations in front of me, but I can confirm that the first tranche of legislation in relation to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce report will be introduced into the parliament very shortly.

Ms CAMM: Thank you. Director-General, does the department have a time frame around the release of the revised interagency guidelines on responding to people who have experienced sexual assault?

Mr Mackie: Thank you for the question, member. I know that it is to be released, but I do not have an exact time frame. I will try to find that for you before the end of the session if there is one.

Ms CAMM: Thank you, I would appreciate that. Director-General, page 11 of the SDS lists an increase of staff for women and violence prevention, from 66 to 90. Are these figures just in FTE, or is there a breakdown of the allocation of those resources across the state?

Mr Mackie: Thank you for the question, member. I will take that question on notice, if the Attorney will allow me, to find if there is a breakdown that we have for that and if it is statewide.

CHAIR: Attorney, are you happy—

Ms FENTIMAN: If we have that information, I am happy to provide it by the end of the session.

Ms CAMM: It may just be a total FTE, which is fine. I would like to know if it is a redistribution of resources.

Ms FENTIMAN: That work may not have been done yet, but we will see.

Ms CAMM: Thank you.

Ms BATES: Attorney-General, you mentioned earlier the record funding from the McMurdo report. Can you explain to the committee how the previous record funding for *Not now, not ever*—\$328.9 million over 10 years—failed in that 10-year review? Why was it necessary to do a subsequent review?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. Nothing has failed, but I think it is pretty clear that our understanding of domestic and family violence and how systems respond to it has changed in the last few years. In 2015, weeks into the Palaszczuk government, we were handed Dame Quentin Bryce's report. The term 'coercive control' really was not even used at that time. Since the tragic death of Hannah Clarke and her three children, there is much more understanding about how domestic violence is a pattern of abuse that happens over time and often involves non-physical violence.

In terms of how we understand and respond to violence, I think things have moved on. That investment continues. There is still wonderful curriculum happening around respectful relationships, although the first Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce asked to us build on that. We are still rolling out specialist courts. Let us not forget that, in 2015 when we were handed Dame Quentin Bryce's report,

there was not a specialist domestic and family violence court anywhere in the country. That has now been independently evaluated and the task force report now says we should continue that work. We are building on the work that Dame Quentin Bruce and the task force started in 2015. I do not think that there is anyone in the community who would think that that means our work has failed. Of course there is so much more that we have to do, but the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce is also building on legislative reform criminalising coercive control and all the recommendations in the report that go to what we have to do first so that that does not have unintended consequences.

Clearly, this government has had a commitment to reform and to protect women and children from domestic and family violence. You are right—we had a historic funding package to implement that report. We are continuing that momentum and we are continuing that investment. We will not stop until we eliminate domestic and family violence from Queensland. I make no apologies for a further report to look at coercive control and at how we can encourage women to come forward when they do not experience physical violence but experience that horrendous control over their lives. We now know how dangerous coercive control can be. It is our biggest predicting factor for intimate partner homicide. That is what the first stage of the task force report does. I make no apologies for having that task force.

Ms BATES: Was a review of *Not now, not ever* done as part of this latest task force? What has worked and what has not worked? I understand about coercive controlling behaviour. I am a survivor of domestic violence. It is not something new; it has been around for years. It is also part of a policy that I have been talking about for the past five years. I understand that the government now gets it, which is great.

Ms FENTIMAN: Not just the government, member for Mudgeeraba, the community—

Ms BATES: Did the review by McMurdo look at the *Not now, not ever* review? How was that rolled out? What worked and what did not?

Ms FENTIMAN: Member for Mudgeeraba, I would encourage you to read the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce report.

Ms BATES: I have read it.

Ms FENTIMAN: Well, if you have read the report you will very clearly see that throughout the report they make reference to *Not now, not ever* recommendations and where things should be continued or where things should be built upon. Clearly, yes, the task force has looked at just how far we have come. Throughout that report, it mentions the work of that task force and the tremendous amount of work that has happened. As a result of that, the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce made specific recommendations about the staged approach we should take to this next reform of work, very clearly stating that *Not now, not ever* was continuing and that there were things in *Not now, not ever* that clearly were getting great results and should be built upon.

Ms BATES: And those that aren't are going to be looked at? So it is not a tick-a-box?

CHAIR: Stop interjecting. Let the Attorney answer the question.

Ms FENTIMAN: I have to take issue with the member for Mudgeeraba's comments that the government now finally gets coercive control. There are still many members of our community who do not understand coercive control. One of the contributors to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce said she did not understand that she was in a domestic violence relationship until the detective that was on TV after Allison Baden-Clay's murder clearly said that there does not have to be physical violence for it to be domestic and family violence. This is a journey that the community is on. I am really proud that our government committed to criminalising coercive control and set up a task force that gave us very clear recommendations about how best to do that and how best to bring the community with us.

CHAIR: I move now to the member for Noosa.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you, Chair. Minister, going back to the perpetrator programs and the increase there, will they be mandated for those under DVOs?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. Sometimes perpetrators attend perpetrator programs that are mandated as part of probation and parole but, other times, perpetrators are encouraged to attend. Not all perpetrators are mandated to attend men's behavioural change programs but, often times, they are strongly encouraged to do so by the court. It would be on a case-by-case basis.

I also have some information for the member for Noosa in relation to how much of the funding for domestic and family violence has gone to the Sunshine Coast and Noosa region. In this financial year the Sunshine Coast region, including Noosa, received almost \$5 million—\$4.9 million in recurrent funding—to domestic, family and sexual violence services, which is an increase on the previous year.

Of course, I recently visited Laurel Place, the sexual assault service which had been experiencing very high demand on the Sunshine Coast, and have given them almost a half-a-million dollar increase to deal with that demand.

From 1 July this year, the Sunshine Coast region will receive an additional \$288,000 per annum for three years from our enhancement funding. From the national partnership funding, the Sunshine Coast region will receive an additional \$642,000 per annum, which is almost a doubling from the previous year.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you. With the rollout of more specialist DFV courts—you mentioned the ones in Brisbane and Cairns—given that over the last two years Noosa alone has experienced year on year a 30 per cent increase in domestic violence, will a specialised DFV court be situated and more accessible within the Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast areas?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. Of course, Southport was the first court in the country and has now been evaluated. We have continued that rollout. We have Southport, Beenleigh, Townsville, Palm Island, Mount Isa and now Brisbane and Cairns—I do not think I have forgotten any—but we will continue to monitor where demand is high as we roll out these courts.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you.

CHAIR: I will go to the member for Maiwar. Member can you be quick?

Mr BERKMAN: I will certainly endeavour to. I will put these questions to the director-general, if I might. I am interested in funding for coronial inquests. I appreciate the correspondence from the minister recently on this. Director-General, is any funding specifically allocated for particular classes of inquest, for example where the state is directly involved if it is a death in custody or in the public health system or, for example, inquests where the deceased person is a First Nations person?

Mr Mackie: Thank you for the question, member. The standard answer to that is the Coroner's office is funded with core funding every year. If there are significant inquests or inquiries that it must perform which might require it to go above what it can actually deal with over the course of a year, sometimes the government does allocate additional funding for those ones. If we look at the domestic and family violence inquests relating to Hannah Baxter et cetera, sometimes they are able to get additional funding to get them over the line if they go across financial years or otherwise.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you. I have a very quick follow-up. This may be a question that would need to be taken on notice, but are you able to give us statistics around what proportion of inquests performed over, say, the last five years or since 2015, have involved those two broad categories: inquests where the state has been involved, or inquests that have related to the death of a First Nations person?

CHAIR: Attorney, do you want to take that on notice?

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes, we will take that on notice.

CHAIR: I will hand over to the member for Cooper.

Ms BUSH: Attorney, gender parity is something that we all care about—or certainly ought to care about. With reference to page 9 of the SDS, I am interested in hearing what work the Queensland government is doing to achieve gender equality?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I am extremely proud of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to empowering Queensland women and girls to succeed. That is why we are continuing to invest in their safety, health and wellbeing.

The Queensland Women's Strategy 2022-27 is our overarching framework aimed at raising the status of women and working towards gender equality. The strategy provides a basis for ensuring that policies and decisions are informed and influenced by women's voices both now and into the future. It builds upon the significant achievements under the previous strategy which include exceeding the bold targets to achieve gender equality on government boards and bodies. Women now make up over 50 per cent of our boards and bodies, which is an increase from 31 per cent back in 2015.

There are: historic legislative changes to allow women to legally access termination and pregnancy services; leading the nation by becoming the first state to provide 10 days paid domestic and family violence leave for Queensland government employees; supporting more than 35,000 women to improve their work opportunities through Skilling Queenslanders for Work; and making changes to make sure that more women and girls are recognised in public spaces through monuments and memorials.

Despite achievements and advancements at a state and national level, gender inequality persists and we must maintain our efforts to ensure women and girls are safe, healthy, respected and economically secure. We know that women have been hardest hit by job losses and ongoing

underemployment as a result of the pandemic. They have also shouldered the majority of caring responsibilities and, sadly, represent the overwhelming majority of victims of domestic and family violence. We also know that more work needs to be done to deliver the deep cultural, systemic and institutional changes needed to address the economic and social inequalities faced by Queensland women and girls. There is still a significant pay gap and superannuation gap, 60 per cent of people accessing specialist homelessness services are women and women still dominate lower paid industries. That is why the main overarching priority of the Women's Strategy is women's economic security, because we know that it is central to achieving every other aspect of gender equality.

The new Queensland Women's Strategy is a bold statement for the next five years to achieve our vision for women and girls in Queensland. We are looking at ways to use government's purchasing power to drive gender equality improvements in the private sector and we are acting as a model employer working through the Special Commissioner, Equity and Diversity to apply a comprehensive approach to gender equality through the Queensland Public Service.

The Queensland Women's Strategy prioritises safety, health and wellbeing, elevating First Nations women, women with diverse backgrounds and experiences, empowerment and recognition. We must build on this momentum—keep stepping up, moving forward and contributing to the change we all want to see. Everyone has a role to play and I look forward to seeing progress in the annual activity statements as we continue to work with the community to implement the commitments under the strategy.

Mr HUNT: Attorney, staying on page 9, could you outline to the committee what further steps have been taken to ensure that agencies are working together to better support victims of domestic and family violence, particularly those victims who engage with police?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. Domestic, family and sexual violence can only be tackled with a multiagency response. One of the great advancements since bringing domestic and family violence out from behind closed doors is that we now understand we all have a part to play. The need to collaborate and align our efforts, lifting each other's understanding and improving each other's practices, is particularly true of the police and frontline services. They are the people victims turn to when seeking support and protection. Thankfully, both the Queensland police and our specialist services work together to acknowledge just how much more there is to do to keep women safe.

In their contribution to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, the Brisbane Domestic Violence Service stated that a current co-responder model involving their service 'helps police to collect evidence, assess risk and determine the most appropriate response for the individual'. It also improves the general understanding and expertise of the police over time. There are a number of locally driven initiatives involving collaborative responses from police and frontline services in place now. For example, in Toowoomba my department is funding the Domestic Violence Action Centre to place a specialist domestic violence worker at the local police station. A small evaluation has shown that it introduced benefits for the client, the service and the police, including improving the experience of engagement with police for victims, improved information sharing and increased police understanding of referral pathways.

Other partnerships are in place in the Moreton region through the PRADO model and on the Gold Coast through the work of the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre. The Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce also recommended that a co-responder model be trialled and evaluated. We have accepted all of the recommendations of the task force's first report and have committed to develop a trial and evaluate a co-responder model involving a mobile co-response to police callouts between the Queensland Police Service and government funded specialist domestic violence services in two trial locations. These cooperative responses to domestic violence provide referrals for victims and perpetrators to services, involve specialist expertise in assessment of risk and safety planning, assist in identification of evidence to prosecute charges and, importantly, reduce misidentification of the person most in need of protection. I look forward to announcing these locations soon.

Mr HUNT: Attorney, remaining on page 9 and the commitment to keep communities safe, can you outline how the government is supporting women and children attempting to leave domestic violence but who do not want to leave their pets behind?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. We know that domestic and family violence can take many forms and, sadly, pets are often harmed or threatened with harm and are used by perpetrators of violence as part of coercive and controlling behaviour to intimidate a victim and children. For some victims of domestic and family violence, concerns about the welfare of their pets can delay

or prevent them from leaving an abusive situation. This was reinforced by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce that heard harrowing stories from victim survivors whose perpetrators turned their violence against their companions. That is why the Pets in Crisis program, run jointly between the RSPCA Queensland and DVConnect, is so important.

The Pets in Crisis program has been running since 2005 and offers safe accommodation and veterinary care support for the pets of people at serious risk of domestic and family violence until they can be reunited with their families in safe, longer term accommodation. I was pleased to join with representatives of both organisations and some of the pets in the program last month to commit \$200,000 to support the RSPCA to expand the Pets in Crisis program in partnership with DVConnect. The funding will provide places for more than 240 additional pets, almost doubling the capacity of the program which cares for around 300 animals a year. Victims can reach out to DVConnect, and they liaise with the RSPCA to find temporary accommodation for pets either at an RSPCA shelter or with trained foster-carers. As Beck O'Connor, the CEO of DVConnect, said, 'No-one should have to choose between escaping abuse or leaving their pets behind in an unsafe home.' The expansion of this program will help us support more Queenslanders to safety.

The Queensland government has delivered new pet-friendly domestic and family violence shelters across Queensland and is supporting existing shelters to be pet friendly over time. This is all part of the Queensland government's commitment to create a Queensland free from domestic and family violence. Now more than ever, we need to let victims of domestic and family violence know that they are not alone and support is available for them and their pets.

In relation to one of the member for Mudgeeraba's questions, as predicted, PPNs are lodged in the court. However, they are issued by police and police are more likely to collect this data.

Mr Mackie: While we are on a roll I will respond to outstanding questions, if I may. I do not think both members are here now, but the member for Clayfield had asked the Commissioner for Liquor and Gaming about the length of time and the longest time to date to grant and transfer a club licence and, separately, the average length of time and the longest time to date to grant and transfer a hotel licence. I can report back to the member that the median process times for all liquor licence transfers in 2021-22, including but not limited to those associated with the grant of a new gaming machine licence, was 48 days. Only two club liquor licences in conjunction with the grant of a new gaming machine licence were approved in 2021-22. Both of those took 93 days to approve. The median processing time to transfer a hotel liquor licence in conjunction with a gaming licence was 111 days. The shortest period for this type of application was 37 days and the longest was 418 days. The 418-day matter was one where the Office of Liquor and Gaming held concerns as to the criminal history and the suitability of an associate of the applicant. A pending liquor transfer is not an impediment to business operation because the Liquor Act does allow an interim authority to be issued to operate a licensed premise while transfer is being progressed. The interim authorities are usually processed within two to three working days.

I have one more, if I may. I think that was from the member for Whitsunday asking about, in the budget statements, the 24 FTE increase between years. I think she was wanting to know where they were at in terms of location et cetera. It is a bit of a list, and I apologise again. One of those FTEs was someone to coordinate the establishment of the peak body, which was recommendation 17 in the report. There were five FTEs that are going to be devoted to the high-risk teams, which was under recommendation 18. I believe that one of those high-risk teams would be Townsville. One is going to be involved in setting up the co-responder model, which was under recommendation 37. There are two FTEs going toward the perpetrator program, which was under recommendations 25, 26 and 28. There are also two perpetrator program FTEs which are going to be specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Nine will go into a general program management office, which is going to coordinate the implementation of all these recommendations within our department. One person is going to data collection and reporting, to ensure we have adequate resourcing in that space and capability to report on those. It was actually under recommendation 86, I believe. Then there are four FTEs as part of providing secretariat support to the implementation supervisor that we were talking about before.

Ms BUSH: Attorney, we have heard already this morning about some of the pressures that our frontline DFV services are facing. Can you update the committee on what funding the government is providing frontline services to support women and families experiencing violence through integrated responses?

Ms FENTIMAN: The Palaszczuk government is committed to strengthening our response to serious cases of violence and better protect those victims most at risk. Our high-risk teams are saving lives. They are a key tool in our capability to tackle domestic and family violence by taking swift and decisive action to support the most vulnerable Queenslanders when they need it most.

High-risk teams provide wraparound supports, including representatives from the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Health, Department of Housing and various support services. These agencies share critical information quickly about a woman at risk of violence and carefully manage her situation. We know that by integrating service responses, increasing perpetrator accountability and formalising information-sharing, we can provide comprehensive, culturally appropriate and effective risk assessments. Independent evaluation of the high-risk team model completed by Griffith University in 2019 found they are improving victim safety and enabling faster and more targeted responses. The Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce's report *Hear her voice* acknowledge the work of high-risk teams and reported widespread positive results about Queensland's integrated response.

I am proud of the work that has been achieved between government and non-government and community sectors to break down barriers and work better together to keep women and children safe, but we know more needs to be done and we have committed to expanding these high-risk teams as part of our response to the taskforce report. We know these highly coordinated teams are working and preventing women and children from slipping through the cracks.

Ms BUSH: Attorney, I know that there is some really great work going on around the representation of women in public places through statues. Can you please inform the committee of the actions you are taking there?

Ms FENTIMAN: Members would by now, I am sure, know the name Malia Knox. In 2020, inspiring young school student Malia petitioned parliament on behalf of the #femalefaces4publicplaces campaign, highlighting the lack of women in public monuments and encouraging us to work together to improve diversity and gender equality in statues and public monuments. We have done just that. In consultation with the Premier, changes have been made to the Queensland government framework for considering proposals to establish memorials and monuments of significance to ensure diversity and inclusivity is considered when approvals are being made for place monuments and memorials on government land. Following this, I wrote to all of Queensland's mayors, encouraging them to consider monuments, acknowledging achievements of significant women in their communities and drawing their attention to possible avenues for funding. Malia launched her own GoFundMe page and raised over \$20,000 towards efforts to install a statue of pioneering Australian geologist and astrobiologist, Dr Abigail Allwood, outside Brisbane Planetarium.

In April I was pleased to join Malia and her mother Kelly and Bec Langdon from Women in Technology to announce that we would contribute \$35,000 in funding, along with Statues for Equality towards the project. Most recently, I was pleased that the Blackall RSL subbranch was successful in receiving funding from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund to build a statue of World War I nurse, Sister Greta Towner. These two women, from different eras and very different fields of works, highlight the incredible diversity of the contribution made by Queensland women at home and internationally. Statues in their honour not only appropriately recognise their contributions but also demonstrate to young girls that they can indeed aspire to any career.

Malia has drawn our attention to an unacceptable inequity. We thank her for her advocacy and will continue to honour our commitment to her and all young girls in Queensland to ensure the wide variety of women's achievements and contributions are recognised in public spaces:

Mr HUNT: Attorney, again with reference to page 9 of the SDS, could you please update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government is supporting Queensland women and girls through the Investing in Queensland Women grant program?

Ms FENTIMAN: The Palaszczuk government is committed to supporting and encouraging women and girls to participate in all aspects of society. That is why we launched the Investing in Queensland Women grant program last year. Since February, more than 90 grants have been provided, totalling almost \$810,000 to support community initiatives that advance gender equality and empower Queensland women and girls. When women are empowered, the economy and the state are strengthened.

The Palaszczuk government has committed \$540,000 across two funding rounds each year to support frontline and community organisations to host events and deliver projects that inspire the community to respect women, embrace gender equality and promote and protect the rights, interests and wellbeing of women and girls. The Investing in Queensland Women grant program recognises that despite positive changes to women's status and roles, gender inequality persists in our community, restricting women's full participation in the social, economic and cultural opportunities that Queensland offers.

Community driven initiatives and activities can include targeted campaigns or events such as workshops or training or the development of community resources to promote and respond to a particular issue. Examples of funded initiatives that reflect the diversity of Queensland women and their priorities include: science technology, engineering or maths career mentoring; resources for women with intellectual disabilities on pregnancy, contraception and consent; mental health workshops for teenage carers; financial security resources for rural agribusiness women; and the Queensland Rugby League's domestic and family violence strategy, as well as health and wellbeing activities for older women.

I am particularly pleased that more than 30 projects are being delivered outside South-East Queensland and at least 14 projects benefit women and girls across the state such as a range of educational resources available online. Applications for the latest round of grants close on Friday, 5 August. I would encourage organisations who are committed to breaking down gender barriers and supporting women and girls to succeed to apply. I look forward to announcing more exciting initiatives once the successful recipients are selected.

Ms BUSH: Attorney, with reference to page 1 of the SDS and the commitment to keep communities safe, can you update the committee on how the government is providing additional support to frontline services to ensure that women experiencing violence have access to support services?

Ms FENTIMAN: Women's safety is a key priority for the government. I am very happy to announce that we have now invested more than \$600 million towards eliminating violence from the community. We know that Queensland's domestic, family and sexual violence service providers have been stretched to the limit over the past two years. The Palaszczuk government, along with the Queensland community, is doing everything it can to prevent domestic and family violence. We have committed more funding than any other government before us, and we are working through fundamental reform.

In the 2021-22 budget, the government committed \$30 million over four years to boost critical services and supports so that women and children will have access to the emergency and longer-term support they need to be safe, secure and well. The initial allocation of \$7.5 million was shared between currently funded domestic, family and sexual violence services as a continuation of the funding support provided earlier to assist services to manage additional demand due to the pandemic. During this time, a preliminary review of demand was completed and this has informed the allocation of the remaining \$22.5 million over the coming three years. I am pleased that this funding has been allocated to 94 domestic, family and sexual violence services across Queensland. Services have been advised of their funding allocation to enable planning and support continuity.

In recent weeks, I have visited numerous services who have welcomed this additional funding. There is no doubt that services are under pressure, but this funding is helping to address additional demand. In Hervey Bay, local member Adrian Tantari and I met with local service providers to discuss the impacts of domestic, family and sexual violence in their region, and I announced an additional \$400,000 to support their work. In Mackay, Julieanne Gilbert and I met with Tersia Mouton from Mackay Women's Services to talk about an additional \$900,000 for the Mackay-Whitsunday region over the next three years to help ease pressure on local services.

For the interest of committee members, services on the Gold Coast will benefit from more than \$2 million under this funding allocation. Services on the Sunshine Coast will receive more than \$865,000 and Beaudesert more than \$290,000. This government is committed to doing everything it can to keep Queensland women and children safe.

Ms BUSH: Attorney-General, with reference to page 9 of the SDS, can you please update the committee on how the government is improving the representation of women in leadership roles?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. The Palaszczuk government understands the importance of supporting women into positions of leadership and ensuring that the views and experiences of women are incorporated at Queensland's highest levels. I am very proud of the commitment that the Palaszczuk government has made to making sure that women have equal opportunities in all aspects of life. We know that gender equality leads to better social and economic outcomes for all, but it can only be achieved when women and men across all parts of the community work together. Amongst our caucus ranks we have many strong, hardworking women parliamentarians who are here to make sure that we continue to deliver for women in their communities. We have 21 strong and passionate women, to be precise, led by Australia's longest serving woman premier.

After a crushing result at the last federal election, when women overwhelmingly turned away from the LNP, I think they are finally starting to realise they may have a problem. The member for Broadwater has finally committed to setting one quota, albeit a very small one, for his three-person economic team.

However, even with such a small target, still there are barely enough women in the LNP caucus to fill those roles. Perhaps if he had not rolled the youngest female member of parliament and taken her seat of Broadwater the LNP would have some more women to choose from.

Recently the LNP had an opportunity to place a woman at the front and centre of their party when electing a new deputy leader. Instead, they went with the member for Kawana, Queensland's worst attorney-general in history. Nonetheless, I do hope that this incremental step from the member for Broadwater will lead to further action from the LNP and I hope that the member for Broadwater will finally set a quota to get more women into parliament. The evidence is overwhelming: targets and quotas work.

The opposition leader has just wrapped up a two-week regional tour of Queensland to recruit women candidates, saying that he wants to see seven out of the 14 seats they need to win held by women. However, even then the Leader of the Opposition has refused to give his personal views about quotas, clearly because he does not believe in them and because he does not want to admit it but the LNP under his leadership has a problem with women. Just like Scott Morrison had a problem with women and Tony Abbott had a problem with women, now David Crisafulli has a problem with women. It is only the Labor Party that has a genuine interest in getting more women into parliament and only the Labor Party is delivering it.

CHAIR: I am conscious that we are coming to the end of the allocated time. Are there any answers to questions taken on notice that have not already been provided?

Ms FENTIMAN: I have an answer on the member for Mudgeeraba's question about GPS trackers. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General does not fit trackers on perpetrators. It is better directed to the Minister for Police, as I suggested earlier.

CHAIR: Are there any others?

Ms FENTIMAN: I have an answer to the question from the member for Whitsunday about the implementation supervisor, which was a recommendation from Hon. Margaret McMurdo. My department is currently working through the necessary steps to appoint an appropriate person to this role. I hope to be in a position to announce the successful appointee in the coming months, once the necessary processes have been undertaken.

Chair, I think that leaves one question about the coronial inquests—we have done liquor licensing—and one about interagency guidelines. There are two outstanding. Is there anything else, Chair?

CHAIR: For accuracy, I would like to check the transcript but I think we are pretty close.

Ms FENTIMAN: We will take those two questions on notice.

CHAIR: I advise that answers to questions that have been taken on notice should be provided to the committee secretariat by 5 pm on Friday, 5 August, please. As you would be aware, you can confirm the exact wording of questions taken on notice from the transcript.

Ms FENTIMAN: I have some concluding remarks, if I may?

CHAIR: Yes, I was going to invite you to do so.

Ms FENTIMAN: Chair, I would like to thank you and the committee members for the conduct of today's hearing. As you have seen, the justice portfolio is responsible for a very wide range of issues that impact Queenslanders every day, and the scale of our reforms is ambitious but achievable. I have seen firsthand the real changes that those working in the department and the statutory agencies are making to people's lives.

I thank the staff within the department and the agencies for their dedicated efforts in helping to promote a fairer and more inclusive community. A special thanks goes to Director-General David Mackie and his deputies and assistants: Jenny, Victoria, Leanne, Peter and Kylie. I would also like to thank the heads of the statutory agencies for their valuable assistance in my role as minister.

I would like to thank all the support staff from the department: Paula, Vanessa, Steve and Roger. They have done an enormous amount of work to get us ready for today. Finally, thank you to my ministerial staff: my chief of staff, Laura Fraser Hardy, and my team of Olivia, Alisha, Phoenix, Finn, Clare, Inga, Monica, Erin, Caitlin, Michaela, Isabelle, Steph and Alice.

I also express my appreciation to the Hansard team and the parliamentary staff on behalf of my team. Again, thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney-General and officers, for your attendance. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 1.30 with the examination of the estimates for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services.

Proceedings suspended from 12.45 pm to 1.30 pm.

ESTIMATES—LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE—POLICE AND CORRECTIVE SERVICES; FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

In Attendance

Hon. MT Ryan, Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services

Mr C Elliot, Chief of Staff

Mr S Lowry, Senior Policy Adviser

Mr N Barter, Senior Policy Adviser

Ms T Nelson, Inspector, Manager and Acting Parliamentary Liaison Officer

Queensland Police Service

Ms K Carroll APM, Commissioner

Mr D Smith, Deputy Commissioner

Mr B Codd, Assistant Commissioner

Queensland Corrective Services

Mr P Stewart APM, Commissioner

Mr S Scougall, Chief of Staff, Office of the Commissioner

Ms S Newman, Acting Deputy Commissioner

Queensland Parole Board

Mr M Byrne QC, President

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services


Mr G Leach, Commissioner

Mr A Dawson APM

Mr A Stevenson, Acting Deputy Commissioner

Office of Inspector-General Emergency Management

Mr A Dawson APM, Inspector-General Emergency Management

 **CHAIR:** This afternoon the committee will examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2022 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services until 5.15 pm. The committee will suspend proceedings during this time for two breaks: between 2.45 pm and 3 pm, and between 4 pm and 4.15 pm. As was determined by the House, the committee will examine areas within the minister's portfolio as follows: police from 1.30 pm to 2.45 pm; corrective services from 3 pm to 4 pm; and fire and emergency services from 4.15 pm to 5.15 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 welcome a non-committee member who has sought and been granted leave to participate in the hearing according to standing orders. I welcome Dale Last MP, member for Burdekin. I remind those present this afternoon that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in the Legislative Assembly also apply in this hearing, and I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion.

I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee. I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as chair 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.

I ask all present to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode or, if not, turned off. I encourage everyone to wear face masks while in the chamber and remind members and officials that it is appropriate to remove your mask when speaking. I also remind everyone that food is not permitted in this chamber. On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, commissioner, officials and members of the public who are watching the broadcast. 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 the commissioner.

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

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, I invite you, if you wish, to make an opening statement of no more than five minutes. Thank you, Minister.

Mr RYAN: Good afternoon, Chair, members of the committee and all those people who are tuning in to the live stream. The Palaszczuk government will always support the critical work of the Queensland Police Service with more personnel, new facilities, the latest resources and stronger laws. This year the budget for the Queensland Police Service exceeds \$3 billion for the first time ever and supports the ongoing record and historic investment in better services to deliver the biggest boost in police numbers in 30 years.

In fact, in this financial year, the approved police officer strength is expected to increase by 370 positions which will take the total increase under the Palaszczuk government to over 1,200 positions, with more to come. Despite nationwide workforce shortages, the government's commitment to deliver 2,025 extra police personnel by the year 2025 remains on track. More than 1,000 new police officers have graduated from Queensland's two police academies since 1 July 2020 and the commissioner is determined to see even more Queenslanders, including young Queenslanders, become police officers.

Police officers put their lives on the line whenever they respond to highly volatile and dangerous situations and they should be protected with the latest technology in officer safety equipment. The government will never compromise the safety of Queensland's police. Our record \$3 billion police budget supports the rollout of new state-of-the-art police equipment over five years from 1 July 2020, including 12,200 of the newest integrated load-bearing ballistic vests, an additional 5,000 new QLITE tablet devices, an additional 4,500 new body worn cameras, and an additional 250 new police vehicles.

I am advised that 12,200 new and replacement body worn cameras have already been received by the Queensland Police Service, with the rollout expected to be completed during this financial year. This is two years ahead of the election commitment schedule and I want to commend those in the Queensland Police Service who have been able to facilitate the early achievement of that very important rollout.

The Queensland Police Service has also increased the vehicle fleet by 129 vehicles since 2019-20, with a further increase of 50 vehicles expected for this financial year. In exciting news, the rollout of the 12,200 state-of-the-art integrated load-bearing ballistic vests will commence this financial year. This rollout is also expected to be completed ahead of the scheduled election commitment time line.

Every day police officers go to work with a determination to support and protect the victims of crime and to bring perpetrators to justice. When a person's life is taken by their partner or a member of their family, with devastating impacts on loved ones, police feel it personally. Police are determined to end the scourge of domestic and family violence. As the commissioner has already stated, if more needs to be done it will be done and we remain committed to doing more—more as a government, more as a community—to keep the entire community safe from some of the most heinous of crimes. Just this year alone, over 13,000 police personnel have already completed the enhanced domestic and family violence training and coercive control training. In addition, a new three-day, face-to-face training program for all police officers will commence this month and new extended face-to-face training for police recruits will commence shortly.

In conclusion, the Palaszczuk government will always back police with the resources, facilities, personnel and laws that they need to keep the community safe. Chair, the commissioner and I are now available to take any questions that the committee may have.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Deputy Chair.

Mrs GERBER: Thank you, Chair. I will hand over to the member for Burdekin for his first question.

Mr LAST: Thank you, Chair. If I could direct my first question to Deputy Commissioner Smith.

Mr RYAN: Mr Chair, I raise a point of order. Whilst I am sure the deputy commissioner may be able to answer the question, under the standing orders the questions have to be directed to me or the commissioner.

CHAIR: That is correct, Minister. Member for Burdekin, could you direct the question again?

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I direct this question to Deputy Commissioner Smith, who has been forthright in previous estimates hearings regarding staffing numbers—

Mr RYAN: Just ask the question.

CHAIR: Yes, just ask the question of the commissioner and then we will go from there.

Mr LAST: I refer to staffing at page 6 of the SDS. What was the number of full-time-equivalent sworn officers employed by the QPS as at 31 March 2021 and 31 March 2022?

Commissioner Carroll: I will get the response because it is to 31 March. I think there may be a question on notice that will answer that. The approved strength on 31 March 2021 was 12,068 and the approved strength on 31 March 2022 was 12,221.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, Budget Strategy and Outlook 2021-22 says that police officer numbers between 2015 and 2021 increased by 728—an increase of less than one per cent per annum. The same paper for 2022-23 shows an increase of 733 officers, despite the additional year. I table a copy of those two documents.

CHAIR: You need to leave to table the documents. Can you clarify the source of the documents?

Mr LAST: Budget Strategy and Outlook at page 119. There is one page from 2021-22 and one page from 2022-23.

CHAIR: There being no objection, leave is granted for the tabling of the documents.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, has the total number of police on the front line only increased by five in the past 12 months, as depicted in those documents, despite the population explosion in Queensland?

Commissioner Carroll: I will have a look at the data that you are referring to because I have a sense that you are referring to MOHRI data. It is a two-week snapshot. For instance, it does not take into account part-time. It does not take into account people who are suspended without pay, on long service leave or on leave without pay in a two-week snapshot. It is incredibly inaccurate to keep reading that every two weeks.

What we look at is the approved strength and headcount, which is a succinct account. If you look at that it gives you a clean snapshot of the increase over time. I can give you those figures. The headcount of all staff was 17,461 as at 30 June 2022 and the headcount of police officers was 12,427, an increase of 143 compared to 30 June 2021 and 141 above the approved police strength. It is incredibly important that we look at the headcount rather than the MOHRI data, which does not give you a succinct picture of what is occurring because it is for a two-week snapshot.

Mr LAST: Are you saying that headcount is the same as full-time equivalents? Is that what you are saying when you refer to headcount?

Commissioner Carroll: Bear with me. It is complex when you are looking at numbers, and particularly MOHRI data. MOHRI data is minimum obligatory human resource information data. It is based on an employee's actual position and the number of hours paid during a snapshot fortnight. This data does not count an employee who was not paid during that pay cycle. It does not include people on unpaid leave or those suspended without pay. MOHRI data also adjusts for those employees who work part-time. A full-time employee on half pay for the full snapshot fortnight will have a MOHRI paid FTE of 0.5. That is why it is complex to work off this fortnight snapshot period.

Mr LAST: Do you appreciate that when you look at the Budget Statutory and Outlook it clearly says between March 2015 and 2021 and it does not say in there anywhere that it is looking at a two-week snapshot? It simply says that the number of police officers increased, for example, in 2021-22 by 728.

Commissioner Carroll: The document refers to MOHRI data, which is exactly that.

Mr LAST: Can you point out where it says that on that page?

Commissioner Carroll: If it is on that document I know that it is done on MOHRI data. By the end of the session I can further clarify that for you. For clarity, the way we work within the organisation is that it is with the growth and actual numbers.

Mr LAST: There is a difference, as you would appreciate, between approved strength and actual numbers. The number we want to know is the number of on-the-ground, frontline police officers available for deployment at a point in time.

Commissioner Carroll: That is the approved strength. The total substantive headcount comprised 12,427 police officers—an increase of 143 from 12,288 as at June 2021.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I refer to question on notice No. 2 relating to policing numbers. In that response, the number of officers who left the QPS during the 2021-22 financial year was 465 and the number of police recruits who graduated during that year was 608—a difference of 143 officers. Prior to the announcement by the minister in 2020 of an additional 2,025 police personnel by 2025, what was the annual recruitment target by the QPS?

Commissioner Carroll: The number I quoted is 145. I will get you the annual target by the end of this session.

Mr LAST: We will come back to that. Commissioner, I refer to the department highlights on page 1 of the SDS, and specifically 'support the implementation of the domestic and family violence prevention strategy'. Has the five-day face-to-face DV training program for all specialist DV officers, as recommended by Coroner Bentley, been funded and when will that training commence?

Commissioner Carroll: Yes, it has been funded. I will get the exact dates when that will commence.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, are you taking that on notice?

Commissioner Carroll: No.

CHAIR: Can you let the commissioner answer the question before you move on to the next question.

Commissioner Carroll: The five-day face-to-face DFV specialist training product is being redeveloped to ensure it is a fit-for-purpose product. That is being done as we speak. This is for DFV specialists. The course is planned for delivery in November 2022. A further three courses are planned for June next year. For other staff the three-day face-to-face course has already commenced.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, how many specialist DV officers does the QPS have?

Commissioner Carroll: I will get you those numbers. Bear with me. We have delivered an additional 24 domestic and violence coordinators. I need to tally the exact total number. I might ask the assistant commissioner for DV command to come to the table. I am trying to add the numbers, but he might have them in his head, so bear with me. I do believe at the moment it is 77.

Assistant Commissioner Codd: There are 77 officers who we would call specialists who are within the VPU's for each of the districts. In addition to that, there are 20 staff members who comprise the HRTs, the high-risk teams.

Mr LAST: Staff members, not officers.

Assistant Commissioner Codd: They are not officers. The HRTs are comprised of staff member specialists. There are 35 members currently in the DV command, but I hasten to add that some of those hold a portfolio to do with elder abuse, mental health et cetera.

Mr LAST: All of those staff have completed the five-day training?

Assistant Commissioner Codd: No.

Mr LAST: How many are still to complete that training?

Assistant Commissioner Codd: A sizeable number. I would say over 40.

Mr LAST: Have still to complete it?

Assistant Commissioner Codd: That is right. The five-day course in its original version has not been run since 2018. There was a moratorium on training through the COVID period. We are now updating that five-day course, that specialist course, in line with learnings from inquests and the commission of inquiry. The first of those will be redelivered in November of this year and a further three by June of next year targeting those specialists who have yet to do it.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, during the inquest into the tragic deaths of Hannah Clarke and her children, information relating to incidents was referred to as 'not recorded as "occurrences" on QPRIME but was still held on this system'. It was described as there were frequent mentions of information being 'in the system' but not accessed at key times. Are upgrades required to either QPRIME or the local communication and dispatch, CAD systems, and, if so, have you applied for that funding?

Commissioner Carroll: Many upgrades were already in process. I will give you an example of one of the technological upgrades on the iPads. In the classic QLiTE, it was very difficult to research partner relationships, past relationships, past issues et cetera. The technological upgrade now brings you all of that information at once which has just come into play in the last six months. In fact, we brought that forward in terms of the upgrade. That was addressed long before the inquest, but obviously the inquest bore that out. Many of those systems issues were starting to be addressed and continue to be addressed. Is your question particularly in relation to QPRIME or other systems as well?

Mr LAST: Certainly QPRIME was mentioned.

Commissioner Carroll: We are in the process of upgrading holistic, I suppose, IT systems—that is, QPRIME, CAD and Policelink. We are in the process of doing a business case. Some of these—CAD, for instance—needed upgrading. We are looking at all of those systems and doing a business case for the future to upgrade all of those together because they are separate systems. I do not know if the AC wants to further answer your question.

Assistant Commissioner Codd: The bulk of the work that we have been doing in this space is on the QLiTEs. The lessons that we learnt out of those inquests we are trying to put in the hands of the frontline officers who are attending the scenes in terms of the information they need—firstly, to understand things like interstate orders present—and to make it easier for them to have robust knowledge drawn from QPRIME and drawn from the national databases right on their front page. QLiTE NextGen has that capability now built in, and we have further enhancements planned over the outgoing year for that purpose.

Commissioner Carroll: Member, can I go back to your question on recruitment?

Mr LAST: Certainly.

Commissioner Carroll: The recruitment target in the next financial year is an increase—this is the increase of staff out of the government commitment. It is 370 this financial year plus attrition, which is about 470 at this stage. Therefore, we are planning to recruit in the next financial year 840 depending on the attrition.

Mr LAST: Just to clarify, prior to the announcement by the minister of the extra 1,450 officers, what was your annual recruitment target?

Commissioner Carroll: It would have been what the attrition was. Our attrition is anywhere between 2.7 to four per cent.

Mr LAST: Given that number and your commitment to providing an additional 1,450 officers by 2025 and the fact that last financial year there was a net gain of 143 officers, do you now admit that it is impossible for you to deliver on your commitment of an additional 1,450 officers by 2025?

Commissioner Carroll: We are doing everything we possibly can to obviously come on that commitment. It is exciting because we want those numbers in the organisation. We have a recruiting campaign out there: 'You're made for it'. If you have not seen it, it is pretty exciting. We are looking at, as we have done in the past, recruiting from interstate. They then require a smaller course as well. We are also asking people at school to start their application earlier so they can join when they are 18 years of age. An extraordinary effort has gone into ensuring that we can increase the numbers but also recruit for the attrition.

Mr LAST: If we could move on to the effectiveness measures on page 3 of the SDS, the rate of sexual offences cleared within 30 days has dropped from 50 per cent to 38 per cent over the last three years. The notes to the effectiveness measures state that 'a definitive explanation ... is not feasible'. Commissioner, how do you intend to address this downward trend and achieve the target of at least 48 per cent?

Commissioner Carroll: This is very complex, as you know, in terms of sexual offences. We set targets on purpose—tough targets because you want to really reach out and achieve that target. One of the complexities around sexual offences is that, if they are historical which many are—in fact, a lot of people only come forward 20 or 30 years after the event—it is very difficult to deal with them in a timely manner. Certainly those other targets have been met. There is nothing untoward here. We believe it is probably historical matters. We do try to reach out—really put those targets out there so we can reach towards them.

Mr LAST: Thank you, Commissioner. I will hand over to the member for Currumbin.

Mrs GERBER: I have a question for the Minister for Police. It has been revealed to me that the police station at Coolangatta and the Coolangatta Magistrates Court will be demolished as part of the light rail expansion through Coolangatta. If Coolangatta is to lose its police station, Minister, will you guarantee that a new police station will be built at Coolangatta in close proximity to the one that is going to be demolished?

Mr RYAN: I am happy to answer the question. Are you able to verify that information? It is certainly information—

Mrs GERBER: Is the minister not aware that that is part of the light rail expansion—that the police station will be resumed?

Mr RYAN: That is not something that has been brought to our attention. Are you able to verify where you got that information from?

Mrs GERBER: Yes, 100 per cent. It was in a meeting with TMR. They have disclosed that as part of the expansion of the light rail through the corridor to Coolangatta. It will include the resumption of the Magistrates Court as well as the police station. I understand that is needed for the expansion of the light rail. Crime is on the rise in our community. I am very concerned that we are going to lose a police station. I would like some certainty.

Mr RYAN: Yes, I have the question. That is a very long preamble and debate here. I have been advised by the Queensland Police Service that we were planning to replace that station anyway and provide an update. Deputy Commissioner Smith's portfolio area is facilities, so I will ask him to provide some more information about that.

Deputy Commissioner Smith: We have been given an indication, not a plan, for what is going to happen at Coolangatta and the Magistrates Court. There may be a narrative that it is to be demolished for that purpose, but we have not been given the definitive plans at the moment. However, as you would be aware, Coolangatta Police Station has been around for a long time. I think it was built in the 1960s, and it was one of the stations that we were planning on doing a submission for its upgrade anyway. If the light rail gets in the way, of course we will have to find another site.

Mrs GERBER: Are you looking at any sites at the moment?

Deputy Commissioner Smith: Not at the moment because, as I indicated, we have not been given a definitive idea of the particular route that you speak of. Whether the conversation you were party to was a definitive or indicative conversation, I am not aware.

Mr RYAN: Further to that, that is probably why it has not been brought to my attention at this point. From the sounds of the evidence given by the deputy commissioner, it is an indicative suggestion at this point. Obviously we are always very keen to make sure that if there is any impact, for whatever reason, on existing police facilities, wherever these facilities may be located is convenient and central to servicing the community.

Mrs GERBER: I am concerned that those services will be maintained in a community that very desperately still needs a police station.

Mr RYAN: It would certainly be a matter for the commissioner around the deployment of police resources. Commissioner, I would have thought that Coolangatta is a very important place to continue policing and that there would always be a need for a facility there.

Commissioner Carroll: As Deputy Commissioner Smith indicated, there were always plans for an upgrade. If it is not in that place, it will certainly be somewhere in that area. Coolangatta is one of the key points on the Gold Coast, so definitely.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, how many court mandated DV tackers on high-risk offenders have been ordered by the courts, and how many offenders have been fitted with those trackers?

Commissioner Carroll: On 30 June 2022, 226 adult offenders on bail were monitored by these devices and 115 cases involved domestic and family violence. Since the introduction of the Bail Act from June 2022—so this is just from that date—there have been 976 court orders made with a condition to wear GPS monitoring for adult bailees, and 361 of these court orders involved domestic and family violence related charges.

Mr LAST: How many ouster provisions have been simultaneously ordered with personal protection notices so that women do not have to wait for a DVO?

Commissioner Carroll: I will just refer to Assistant Commissioner Cobb for this. The ouster orders I think were very difficult to glean from the QPRIME system, so I will just get Brian up here again because we had to do a manual data drop.

Assistant Commissioner Cobb: I managed to get some data as we were preparing. There have been a total of 7,241 PPN ouster conditions for the 2021-22 year. I should point out that sometimes you can have multiple ouster conditions on orders. There were 4,478 persons and a number of those had multiples, which brings you to that 7,241.

Ms BOLTON: Minister, with reference to pre-estimates question No. 19, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads has confirmed the installation of early alert monitors on bridges. As a result, can you confirm that the upgrade of ICT systems will connect to these monitors and ensure real-time dispersal beyond the list provided in your response to include councils, volunteer organisations including SES, Google Maps and Apple apps?

Mr RYAN: Member, that is very specific and technical.

Ms BOLTON: I am happy to place it on notice.

Mr RYAN: How about you ask it in the QFES section, because they will be the coordinators around those alerts. We will ask the commissioner for the fire service to provide some details.

Ms BOLTON: We have been seeking the integration of QPS systems with QPWS, DAF et cetera. What progress has been made there?

Mr RYAN: I know that we have been investigating those opportunities. There has been some recent legislation proposed around the recognition of identity cards as well, which is important. I know that there was a question on notice that we provided an answer to previously—I am just trying to recall that—where we said that there is potential for that, but obviously we need to work through the system upgrade. I am looking at Deputy Commissioner Smith. We might try and get some further information for you before the session is over.

Ms BOLTON: I am happy to place it on notice.

Mr RYAN: I know from your previous question on notice on this particular issue that you have raised it, and it is a matter that we would have been investigating.

Ms BOLTON: Commissioner, I see that we have 150 new sworn officers due to the north coast region, starting July this year, over the next five years. Can you outline what strategy will be utilised regarding our hotspots as in where alcohol is involved—alcohol fuelled violence—so that our councils and businesses are not having to self-fund the overtime hours for police to address those hotspots?

Commissioner Carroll: Member, 150 for a region is exceptional because it really is up to me, the assistant commissioners and the district officers to allocate where we need those staff. In each region now we do demand modelling to see where they are most required. Demand modelling is a lot more complex than people think. It is not just calls for service. It looks at crime, demographics, calls for service and how long it takes; it looks at where your people are congregating. The assistant commissioners for each of the regions have looked at their various areas and are allocating their staff where they need them. I know that your assistant commissioner has already done that, and if it is required in those areas it will certainly be allocated to those areas.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, did the QPS allocate any money to upgrade the Caloundra watch house prior to a decision being made to repurpose it?

Commissioner Carroll: I do believe that money was all from Youth Justice. Yes, it was.

Mr LAST: In that case, can I ask for a copy of the infrastructure plan from the police facilities section, and how much was it?

Commissioner Carroll: I will pass to Doug, but it was the responsibility of the other department.

CHAIR: I think it is under the auspices of Youth Justice and therefore not under your portfolio, Minister.

Mr RYAN: From the point of view of being police infrastructure, we are happy to answer it from a police infrastructure point of view.

Deputy Commissioner Smith: There are two parts to your question. Obviously, one part relates to what has occurred with the building in recent times, in the last few months or year or so, and the other is our long-term planning. If I am reading correctly what you are saying, you are talking about a long-term plan. Our long-term plan for the southern Sunshine Coast police district has always indicated that the Caloundra watch house will continue in some form, whether it would have been at that current

location or not. Our planning for the southern part of the Sunshine Coast is the Caloundra South Police Station, upgrades to the Caloundra Police Station and obviously the new police station at Nambour. With the events recently with respect to the watch house, we took the opportunity to work with Youth Justice, which are funding the upgrade, to bring it up to the specifications that will mean it will be a 24-hour watch house. I do not know whether that helps.

Mr LAST: We are talking the watch house, not the police station?

Deputy Commissioner Smith: We are talking about the watch house. The watch house had been basically used as a local watch house for court purposes and major events. However, we were always planning, with the growth that is on the southern part of the Sunshine Coast, for an increase in those facilities. Obviously, that would have included the ability to increase the use of that particular watch house. It was not suitable for a 24-hour watch house in its form as it was, but the opportunity that has been presented to us means that we can increase it now.

Mr LAST: So are you able to tell the committee how much has been allocated for that project?

Deputy Commissioner Smith: I can give you that number if you give me a moment to get it.

Mr LAST: That is fine.

Deputy Commissioner Smith: That funding now is coming from Youth Justice, not from the Police Service budget.

Mr LAST: Before that, what was the allocation?

Deputy Commissioner Smith: There had been no amount allocated. It was part of the planning. Obviously, you go through the conceptual design and you work out what the growth in the particular area is going to look like. We have been using the Maroochydore watch house as the 24-hour facility for the whole of the Sunshine Coast, but obviously our planning was estimating that there would be a need but we had not allocated specific funds. We had not done all of those costings.

Mr LAST: Thank you.

CHAIR: I will now hand over to the member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: I would like to put my first question to Commissioner Carroll, and it is around the use of spit hoods in Queensland watch houses. These have been described by the UN as torture devices and Queensland remains the only jurisdiction apart from the Northern Territory that still allows their use. How many times have spit hoods been used in Queensland police watch houses each year since 2019, including on children under the age of 18 years, and for what durations?

Commissioner Carroll: I will get that answer to you by the end of the session. They have not been used much—in fact, not at all in the last six or seven months. We are working closely with the children's commissioner to look at other options. Certainly, they have not been used and we are working very closely with the children's commissioner to make sure that in the future we have other options rather than that.

Mr BERKMAN: That relates very closely to the following question I was going to ask. Noting that spit hoods cannot be used in youth detention facilities but they are used in watch houses where children are sometimes detained, are there any rules or processes in place to ensure that young children—children as young as 10—are not subjected to the use of these devices when they are being held in watch houses?

Commissioner Carroll: Interestingly, it is only in watch houses, not even outside of a watch house. I cannot speak to the past policy, but I am well aware that we are one of the rare ones that still has that in place. We are looking at very closely working with the children's commissioner to stop that use in the future. It is just looking at how else we deal with those instances in our use of force options. That is happening into the future.

Mr BERKMAN: I have a very brief follow-up question to the minister. Minister, given what we have just heard from the commissioner, what steps is the government taking to ban the use of spit hoods and restraint chairs, as other jurisdictions around Australia have done?

Mr RYAN: The commissioner has been very clear around the police operational use of that. The advice that I have got is that they are rarely used and in recent times have not been used. Obviously, we need to get the policy mix right to work with the operational requirements of the Queensland Police Service. Certainly, it would be the government's view that we would work alongside the Police Service to ensure that they had appropriate use of force options which did not include spit hoods.

Mr BERKMAN: So there is no intention on the government's part to ban the use of spit hoods and restraint chairs.

Mr RYAN: No, I do not think you heard me there.

Mr BERKMAN: I am sorry. My apologies, I am just seeking clarification.

Mr RYAN: I said the government would be working with the Police Service to ensure there were use of force options other than spit hoods.

Mr BERKMAN: Thanks, Minister. I will ask another question if the Chair will indulge me?

CHAIR: No, I won't indulge you. I ask the member for Caloundra to ask the next question.

Mr HUNT: Minister, with regard to honours and awards and with reference to page 1 of the SDS and the QPS objectives, would you please provide the committee with examples of the QPS members who embody these objectives for the honours and awards?

Mr RYAN: Thank you, member. As a person who has previously been in a uniformed service, you serve because it is a vocation and you want to make a contribution. It is appropriate to recognise at appropriate times that extraordinary service, whether it is longevity of service, ethical service or courageous service. I recognise that when you were in a uniformed service you served your agency and community with great honour and distinction.

We recently recognised some people for their outstanding contribution. It is a very important thing for a uniformed service like the Queensland Police Service to be able to do that. When the commissioner and I officially opened Nambour Police Station, we presented a Queensland Police Valour Medal to a number of officers. This medal is the highest bravery award that can be awarded to a Queensland Police Service officer.

Sergeant David Whyte was awarded the Queensland Police Valour Medal for his exceptionally brave actions when he was confronted with an armed offender. I will go into the detail because I think it is important to highlight courageous service. In that instance, the offender had levelled a loaded pump action shotgun at Sergeant Whyte whilst articulating his intention to resist being arrested. Believing he was about to be shot, Sergeant Whyte charged at and knocked over the offender, who continued to violently struggle with the sergeant until he was overpowered and arrested.

I was also recently at another award ceremony at police headquarters where we recognised a number of officers for historic bravery with the Queensland Police Valour Medal for their actions in connection with the fatal shooting of one of their colleagues, Senior Constable Peter Kidd, 35 years ago. It is important to recognise that service.

It was also one of the great honours of my life to be in the presence of a number of police officers when Deputy Commissioner Doug Smith was recently awarded the Queensland Police Meritorious Service Medal—the highest conspicuous service medal that can be awarded to members of the service. That is for his extraordinary and exceptional contribution to Australia, Queensland and the Police Service. Incidentally, Deputy Commissioner Smith has been in the Police Service in Queensland twice. The first was from 1975 to 1997, where he was involved in a number of things, including writing legislation. He was also involved with the Brisbane Commonwealth Games, Expo 88 and the Fitzgerald inquiry. He has also served in a number of other agencies, including Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, the Northern Territory police and the Victorian police. He was with the Illawarra steel company, wasn't it, Deputy Commissioner?

Deputy Commissioner Smith: Technology corporation.

Mr RYAN: The Illawarra Technology Corporation in the Solomon Islands connected with the Australian Federal Police at that point, and he also served as the CEO of the ACIC. Deputy Commissioner Smith has served his community with honour and distinction for 50 years, and today is his last day. I would like to commend Deputy Commissioner Smith for his service, a career of service. It has been exceptional. Certainly, the Queensland Police Service and the Queensland community is better and safer because of his efforts.

Because his efforts have much legacy, I would like to seek the leave of the committee to table the official certificate of his Queensland Police Meritorious Service Medal which records his distinct contribution. I would like to finish this contribution by reading the last paragraph—

Deputy Commissioner Douglas Alan Smith has fulfilled his Oath of Service and provided a substantial contribution to the Queensland community.

I know it is probably out of order, but if members of the committee would like to join me in giving Commissioner Doug Smith a round of applause I would be grateful. Thank you.

CHAIR: Before we move on, is leave granted to table the document handed over by the minister? Leave is granted. Thank you, Minister.

Mr HUNT: Minister, thank you very much for that. Before I go on, I hope you will indulge me for just a moment in what I think is perhaps the greatest understatement ever written, where it says 'Deputy Commissioner Douglas Alan Smith has fulfilled his Oath of Service'. I reckon he has—and then some. Thank you very much, Deputy Commissioner. Moving on, with reference to page 1 of the SDS and the QPS objective to build a safer Queensland, will the commissioner please update the committee on the work of the QPS to protect children from harm?

Commissioner Carroll: I thank the member for the question. As you know, the QPS is committed to protecting children from harm in Queensland and elsewhere nationally and internationally. The QPS is one of the primary agencies which provides first-response 24/7 services for child protection matters. The QPS has 35 child protection and investigation units across the state staffed by over 600 highly trained, skilled and professional investigators who provide a specialist policing response to children both as victims and as offenders.

The QPS continues to ensure that the protection of children from harm is a key objective of the service through the recently developed statewide child harm communication strategy. This ensures a consistent approach in relation to the protection of children from harm in first-response situations. The strategy consists of a large range of activities over the next 12 months which aim to remind and reinforce for all officers the importance of identifying and reporting child harm, if present, at any job they attend.

Launched also was the child sexual abuse fundamentals education online learning product in January 2022. The training product is mandatory for all police officers from the rank of constable to inspector as well as Policelink staff and client service officers. As of 25 July 2022 a total of 6,390 officers and staff members have completed this training using technology to proactively target and prosecute people who offend against children. Between 1 July 2021 and 15 June 2022 Argos officers arrested 32 offenders on 142 child sexual offences and referred a further 199 files for investigation.

There was also the delivery of the digital field triage of electronic devices training, which allows the rapid identification of child exploitation material on suspect devices at the scene. As at June 2022 a total of 475 officers across the state have been trained in this course.

There have been continued intelligence and surveillance activities to monitor reportable offenders as a result of the \$27 million in funding from a government commitment; review of deaths and serious injuries of children to identify prevention and improvement strategies; and, of course, always our continued relationship with government and non-government agencies, including what is one of the best in the world, the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation, to ensure multiagency approaches are delivered in all areas to protect children from harm across all of Queensland.

Ms BUSH: Thank you, Deputy Commissioner Smith, for your service. I have a question to the commissioner. Commissioner, there has already been a focus this afternoon on discussing the police role in responding to domestic and family violence, as there ought to be. Can you update the committee on the enhancements being made to domestic and family violence training for police officers?

Commissioner Carroll: Thank you for the question. This has certainly been a focus of my organisation under my leadership for a number of years now. As of June last year the QPS released a mandatory online domestic and family violence policing enhancement training product aimed at developing an improved understanding of the complex nuances and dynamics of domestic and family violence and to refresh officers' knowledge about legislative, policy and procedural requirements and considerations when investigating domestic and family violence. As at 7 July, 13,745 members have completed the training.

A further online training package was developed with our partners ANROWS, the Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, and the Queensland domestic violence death review and advisory unit to accurately identify the person in most need of protection. This product was released to all members on 31 January 2022 and aimed to improve their recognition of, response to and investigation of coercive control within a domestic and family violence context. As at 7 July, 16,527 QPS members have completed that training.

A three-day face-to-face training DV product has also been completed. The holistic approach was co-developed with ANROWS. The 'train the trainer' courses for this training commenced on 3 July and the training is to be delivered to all members throughout the 15 districts by 30 June 2023.

As was touched on previously, the five day face-to-face DFV specialist product has been redeveloped to ensure a fit-for-purpose product for members performing duty in a DFV specialist environment, for example—and the assistant commissioner touched on this—members of the domestic and family violence and vulnerable persons unit. This course is planned for delivery in November 2022, with a further three courses to be delivered by July 2023.

The QPS has also developed training to support the implementation of the Evidence and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2022, which will enable trained police officers to obtain a videorecorded evidence statement from DFV adult victims to use in criminal proceedings. This is being trialled in two areas, which we are really excited about. It will commence in the Gold Coast and Ipswich districts. As well as all of that, there have also been other advancements from 2021 to recruit and first-year constable training for DFV. This has involved online as well as face-to-face training. Thank you for your question. A lot is happening in this space.

Mr HUNT: With reference to pages 6 and 8 of the SDS and the record \$3 billion police budget, Commissioner, could you please update the committee on how this investment is enhancing police services on the Sunshine Coast?

Commissioner Carroll: I thank the member for the question. A total of \$9 million has been allocated on the QPS capital works program for the new Caloundra South police facility. I did have the pleasure of being there with the police very recently, in the very area we would like to place this facility in the future. This project will support 28 jobs, and a budget of half a million dollars has been allocated in the 2022-23 program to commence the planning stage.

I am also fast-tracking an allocation of 10 extra police officers. Ultimately, they will be destined for the new facility at Caloundra South. However, they will be initially hosted at the Caloundra Police Station and will later join the additional police in the new facility. That has already commenced. Five of these officers were allocated and commenced in 2021-22 and a further five officers will be allocated in 2022-23.

The proposal—and the deputy has spoken to this—to repurpose the Caloundra Watch House into a temporary short-term youth remand centre was withdrawn after, as you know, extensive consultation. However, as you have heard, it is incredibly important for us into the future in the Caloundra South area to have a 24/7 operational watch house. QPS has committed \$0.164 million for the design of the watch house to return the facility as operational into the future for 2023. That is for the planning to then build a watch house as we need it into the future for our purposes.

A total of \$4 million has also been allocated in the QPS capital works program for the Cooroy replacement police facility. I also had the pleasure of being in Cooroy recently to talk to the community about what they want in the new police station.

One of those wants is to have the facade fit the rest of the town, which is incredibly important to them. A budget of \$1.86 million has been allocated in the 2022-23 program, which is at the design stage. Further to that, a couple of weeks ago I was in Nambour to open the new police station. It was lovely to be back there because it was my training station, so it was nice to be back to welcome some of the staff that I worked with many years ago and to open that station. Thank you, member.

Ms BUSH: Minister, with reference to page 6 of the SDS, and noting the QPS capital budget of \$174.6 million over the 2022-23 budget period, can you update the committee on new and upgraded police infrastructure across Queensland?

Mr RYAN: Thanks very much, member. It is a very important program that we have, not only for the renewal of police facilities, but also to build bigger and better facilities to accommodate the police growth which is coming online. The commissioner made mention of that police growth before in earlier questions, but so far under our government from 1 March to 30 June this year, there have been 856 additional approved police officer positions. That number is expected to grow by another 370 this year to 1,226 additional police approved positions. This is a big increase that obviously supports policing right across the state, but when we do that, we need to have the facilities to accommodate them.

At the last election we made a commitment to the people of Queensland and to the Queensland Police Service that we would support a five-year, \$300 million police infrastructure pipeline, and we are well on track. We are building facilities all over the state. The commissioner and I often joke that we are essentially opening a police station every couple of months because of the big building works that are going on!

I will give a snapshot of the last 12 months and the 12 months to come—I will go alphabetically for everyone. We have almost finished the facility at Aurukun, so we will be heading up to Aurukun hopefully by the end of the year to officially open that facility. In the member for Scenic Rim's electorate, Beaudesert was opened this year. It is a very good facility; we are very proud of that one. Biloela has just opened—some of these places are very remote. In Burketown, the facility is well under way; the Cairns police station has a \$17 million upgrade that is well under way; in Caloundra South—in your electorate member for Caloundra—the planning is proceeding very well and we hope to start construction obviously next year. Clermont—near the member for Burdekin—Cooroy, Cunnamulla,

Dalby, Dayboro, Hervey Bay and Kirwan. The Premier today announced the demolition contract for the stadium site where the new Kirwan police facility will be going. Longreach, Mackay, Maryborough—we have just opened Nambour, the commissioner's first training station only a few years ago. Palm Island—we have announced a new facility there. Proserpine—we were up there a couple of weeks ago, they are very excited. Rainbow Beach, Ripley, Rosewood, Warwick, Winton and Woree. That is just a snapshot of the current period. It is a huge list. There is many more to come in future years, but we are very proud of our commitment to the Police Service and also to the construction industry and economic activity which will obviously be beneficiaries of the infrastructure pipeline.

Ms BUSH: Commissioner, can you outline for the committee what crime prevention and early intervention initiatives are in place to assist young people, in particular those serious repeat youth offenders, in making more positive life choices?

Commissioner Carroll: Thank you, member. As you know, this is a very challenging and important part of the work of QPS. We are committed to the implementation of the Youth Justice Strategy and the current activities that we are driving are fostering those collaborative relationships and partnerships to really stop youth from entering into the youth justice system.

You will see that over the last several years, it has been extraordinarily successful in bringing down those unique offender numbers—that small cohort that still really challenge us. We are providing pathways to address the causes of offending and antisocial behaviours, including the consideration of the different needs of girls and young women. We are supporting diversion through police cautioning and diversion programs and the Protected Admissions Scheme. We are encouraging positive and culturally appropriate engagement with young people to facilitate those improved outcomes, and continuing obviously to lead the government's five-point plan in maintaining a culture of continuous improvement, review and emerging youth justice strategies to reduce recidivism offending.

All of the commissioners got together two weeks ago on the Gold Coast and interestingly, we are all grappling with the issue of known youth offending at the moment. So much so that ANZPAA, which is the national advisory body which all of the commissioners sit on, will have a forum in September to look at not only preventive strategies across the nation and response strategies, but also sustainable strategies over a period of time because this is not a silver-bullet, short-term fix. Even Bob Atkinson in his Four Pillars report speaks about that long game, that sustainable game, and that is what we are looking at.

Looking at action one of the five-point plan—police and police liaison officers do conduct intensive supervision activities in 10 locations. In the 2021-22 period, police engaged 9,234 times with young people. We have youth responder teams—and that is action three—and is currently in eight locations. The aim of that measure—and I have spoken about this—is to prevent and divert, to reduce the overrepresentation particularly of First Nations young people in our youth justice system, to connect young people and families with tailored community supports and interventions, to address the cause of offending, and to engage cultural and community networks and to facilitate information sharing between partner agencies. We have seen this, particularly in the last 12 months where we have established the collaborative panels—all of the information is shared by the agencies, particularly around that group of people that we really need to work with. Not only is it concentrating on that individual child, but it is also concentrating on the family as well, which is incredibly important.

There have been 18,566 interactions with young people during 2021-22, so under the action plan we have funding for community based crime action committees in 12 locations. This is all about dealing with local issues at a local level, including organisations such as Horses Helping Humans, Pedals and the Jack Beasley Foundation, which is the knife crime prevention work that we do. The Youth Justice Taskforce has implemented the multiagency Youth Justice Strategy Action Plan. It contains a lot of legislation reform, and strategies to reduce offending. Obviously, I spoke to the collaborative panels. I believe that for the first time in my time in policing, we share similar information now with youth justice and we are looking at the same cohort of children and both agencies, as well as the rest of the agencies around that table—Health, Education, Housing—are all looking at the child and family.

In addition to that work, they are also recognising that the 72-hour release period after detention is incredibly important. How do we put a plan in around that child and around that family, particularly as they come out of that detention period, to make sure that we decrease, whenever we can, that serious repeat offending into the future?

Mr HUNT: Minister, with reference to page 90 of the budget paper and the budget for new and replacement QPS vehicles of \$48.9 million, could you please update the committee on how the latest vehicle technology will enhance community safety?

Mr RYAN: Like a lot of things when it comes to the government's support for the Queensland Police Service, it is a record. On the information I have, the amount of \$48.981 million is the biggest ever allocation for vehicles for the Queensland Police Service. It actually takes us to the biggest fleet ever. In fact, the fleet at the moment is 2,931 and we have a big program for this financial year. It is big numbers. You can just imagine these cars sitting in a dealership somewhere. There are 1,127 new vehicles expected for the Queensland Police Service this year. That is made up of 1,069 replacements, 50 growth vehicles—connected to our election commitment—and something that everyone on both sides of politics is very excited about: eight mobile police beats coming online in the next financial year.

One of the exciting things we are seeing around the fleet—I thank Deputy Commissioner Doug Smith and his team around managing fleet—is how we are changing the type of vehicles we are using not only to be more cost efficient but also to have as little impact on the environment as possible. To the best of my knowledge, the Queensland Police Service became the first police service in Australia to trial a hydrogen police vehicle. It has lights, sirens and all the decals on it; in fact, the commissioner enjoyed driving it the other day at the academy when we unveiled it. I might have also test-driven it—very safely.

It is about leading the conversation around the future of vehicles. We also have a huge range of hybrid vehicles and electric vehicles in the fleet. That is having an impact on reducing the Queensland Police Service's carbon footprint. It is also having an impact on the costs that the Queensland Police Service incurs in connection to its vehicle fleet. Over time we will see the number of those types of vehicles in the Queensland Police Service increase. Obviously, that is important for all of us.

CHAIR: The committee is due for a break shortly. Minister, I understand there may be—

Mr RYAN: I have some information.

CHAIR: Yes. I understand that there was one matter outstanding?

Mr RYAN: The information I have is for the member for Maiwar in respect of safety hoods being used on young people. Since 2015—seven years—there were 20 youths. There have been none in the last seven months. That is obviously a position that the commissioner has made very clear. I am not trying to put things into context, but over the same period of time there have been 353,000 people in custody. It is a very small instance but, nonetheless, it was 20 times in the last seven years in respect of a young offender.

CHAIR: Minister, is there anything you would like to add before we end this session?

Mr RYAN: Yes. I take the opportunity to thank those people who have participated in this session: the commissioner and her team, including Acting Superintendent Rob Fleischer; the deputy commissioners; the assistant commissioners; and other staff who have made a contribution to the estimates process. I would like to particularly thank the Queensland Police Service estimates team including Inspector Tania Nelson, Margaret Cameron, Allyra Forrester, Belinda Dryden, Paul Friedman, Tony Brown and Andrew Ross. Noting that half of them had COVID for a period of time recently, they have made an outstanding effort. Thanks also to Inspector Alisa La Pila, the acting ministerial liaison officer in my office, who is assisted by Judy Kidcaff.

I think this goes without saying—I am sure it will have unanimous support from the committee—but I thank every single member of the Queensland Police Service, whether they are sworn officers or frontline support staff members. The work that they do is outstanding and we commend them for it. We are grateful and safer because of it. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: I do not think there are any questions outstanding but, if there are, could responses be provided to the committee secretariat by 5 pm on Friday, 5 August?

Mr RYAN: Certainly, Chair, if there is anything outstanding we will have an answer by the end of today.

CHAIR: The hearing will resume at 3 pm.

Mr BERKMAN: Chair, point of order: I appreciate the information that the minister has just provided. I want to note that the question I asked was specifically for the period since 2019. I acknowledge that it is a longer period that the minister has given data for. I am specifically interested in a shorter window.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Maiwar. The hearing will resume at 3 pm with the examination of estimates for the corrective services portfolio area.

Mr BERKMAN: Point of order, Chair.


CHAIR: No point of order.

Mr BERKMAN: Point of order, Chair?

CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I wish Deputy Commissioner Smith a well-deserved retirement and thank him for his service over the years. Thank you. We will now adjourn.

Mr BERKMAN: Point of order?

Proceedings suspended from 2.45 pm to 3.00 pm.

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of corrective services open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

The visiting member is Dale Last MP, member for Burdekin. Minister, if you wish you may make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

Mr RYAN: Thank you very much, Chair, and it is good to be back. Can I just also finalise the information from the last session around the use of safety hoods since 2019 on youths. It has been eight since 2019.

Chair, in respect of this session, thank you very much for the opportunity to say a few words. This year's Appropriation Bill allocated a record \$1.17 billion for the operational budget of Queensland Corrective Services, which is an almost eight per cent increase from last year. In addition to the record operational budget, the capital budget of more than half a billion dollars reflects the Palaszczuk government's commitment to better jobs and better services.

Last night there were 9,443 prisoners in Queensland correctional facilities requiring a bed, but across the correctional system we had more than 10,000 built beds. We have sufficient prison beds because we have taken strong decisions and delivered more than 3,600 additional beds since taking office in 2015. Our record corrections budget will further boost safety through the installation of additional latches in older style cell doors and the deployment of additional body worn cameras for staff. Body worn cameras not only show what the wearer saw, but are a deterrent to inappropriate behaviour.

COVID-19 continues to impact all Queenslanders and this extends to the operation of correctional centres and community corrections facilities. Corrective services staff and the prisoners within correctional centres cannot socially distance themselves in the same way other Queenslanders can. Despite the challenges of COVID-19 staff were able to ensure Queensland's correctional centres continued to function effectively and achieve the near impossible by essentially keeping COVID out of Queensland prisons until the vaccination program could be rolled out.

This budget also supports extended and additional resourcing for the Parole Board Queensland, with an increased and record operating budget of \$16.9 million, up more than 100 per cent on the budget set when the board was first established in 2017. This extra funding represents a doubling of the initial capacity of the Parole Board, ensuring it has access to the resources and critical intelligence and information it needs to make evidence based, community safety centred parole decisions.

A new world-class training system has been developed in partnership with Swinburne University of Technology providing initial and ongoing training focusing on core skills and practice. The training contains specific modules focused on family and intimate partner violence, sexual offending, working with substance misusers, working with First Nations people, as well as trauma informed and gender responsive practice. Officers will be equipped with the skills to deliver evidence based management and rehabilitation interventions with a focus on community safety as the highest priority.

I am also pleased to announce that retired District Court judge Milton Griffin QC has been appointed to undertake the recommended five-year review of the Queensland parole system. Also—and it is a very proud moment for our government—on 1 July 2021 the last remaining privately operated correctional centre was transitioned to public operation under the control of Queensland Corrective Services. While it was reported that the LNP had a secret plan to privatise Queensland prisons, we had an open and transparent plan to bring all correctional centres under the control of the state and we did just that. The commissioner and I are now available to take any questions the committee might have.

CHAIR: I will hand over to the deputy chair.

Mrs GERBER: The member for Burdekin has some questions.

Mr LAST: My first question is to the commissioner. Commissioner, I refer to staffing on page 6 of the SDS. Of the additional nine staff allocated in the budget, how many of those positions will be custodial correctional officer positions?

Commissioner Stewart: I thank the member for the question. I start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to elders past and present. The nine additional staff, some of those staff will be made up of cultural liaison officers. We have additional cultural liaison officers as a part of the budget from last year. Can I just start by clarifying that whilst it is nine positions additional, we have actually got additional positions over and above that. The way that our budget operates in FTEs, we are allocated a number of FTEs through the year based on prisoner numbers. For our last financial year we had a maximum of approximately 10,270 prisoners and so therefore, as a result of that, the FTE increased in order to make sure that we had sufficient custodial officers in order to safely and securely manage the system. At the end of the year we true up in relation to that based on what the prisoner numbers look like at that particular time and, as the minister alluded to before, currently we have approximately 9,400 prisoners in our system. The number of officers, therefore, that are required to keep the system safe has reduced from the time that we had 10,280. Therefore, we have been allocated a number of additional positions including psychologists, including cultural—

Mr LAST: It was a very specific question. How many of the nine are CCO positions?

Commissioner Stewart: None of the nine will be custodial correctional officers.

Mr LAST: Thank you. How many vacancies are there currently for CCOs broken down by centres?

Commissioner Stewart: We have vacancies all the time across our centres and across our organisation and we continually recruit and have a workforce strategy that we address to ensure that we have enough people in the centres to safely do the work that we do. To break down the vacancies—it would be a really complex process to identify the exact number of vacancies when we have permanent staff, temporary staff, casual staff that come in. We relocate staff as we are required to do that. The issue for us really is making sure that we have sufficient people to work on posts to make sure that the centres are run safely at any given time. We also then have a process where we recruit for custodial officers and train them for 10 weeks in order to make sure they are able to do the work that they do. We also have overtime, the ability to put people on overtime, to make sure that we have sufficient people to staff the posts to make sure that we maintain the safety within our correctional centres.

Mr LAST: A ballpark figure as of today, how many vacancies would you have across your portfolio in all your correctional centres?

Commissioner Stewart: At the end of the year with the FTEs that we had, we had approximately 100 across the whole of the organisation. That is just not custodial, that includes community corrections and that also includes organisational capability. Given that it has been really quite difficult to recruit at times people into specialist positions like psychologists and into community corrections, given that we have got an FTE count of approximately 6,000, that is not a lot of vacancies given we have a number of temporary people and a number of people we can bring on to do the work we do.

Mr LAST: How many CCOs were appointed during the 2021-22 financial year and how many left the employment of QCS?

Commissioner Stewart: I will have to take time. If it is possible, can we come back, because we will need to talk to our assistant commissioner?

Mr RYAN: We should be able to come back by the end of this session.

Mr LAST: That is fine. The question is: how many CCOs were appointed during the 2021-22 financial year and how many left the employ? Commissioner, a media statement from the minister dated 5 July 2022 states that, once operational, there will be 600 ongoing operational jobs at the Southern Queensland Correctional Centre and that the centre will be fully operational by the end of 2023. How many staff do you currently have—

Mr RYAN: Point of order. I want the member to accurately quote the statement. It would have said that construction will be finished at the end of 2023. The commissioning is in 2024.

Mr LAST: That is fine.

Mr RYAN: I do not want you to mislead the committee.

Mr LAST: How many staff do you currently have at that particular centre?

Commissioner Stewart: We are currently constructing at that site. The site is at Gatton, beside the existing Southern Queensland Correctional Centre, which is a women's facility. We are in the process of constructing the Southern Queensland Correctional Centre stage 2. We have a program

team and a project team that are delivering that, and we have received additional funding to bring forward an operational team and a leadership team to start working up the operating model in relation to that. However, the centre will not actually be commissioned until 2024.

Mr RYAN: It is not built yet. It is still being built.

Mr LAST: I appreciate that. Minister, in the last three successive budgets you have overseen new staff numbers reduce from 746 to 344 to just nine this year. How can Queenslanders and QCS staff have any faith that you will deliver the additional officers needed to operate the Southern Queensland Correctional Precinct?

Mr RYAN: That is a bit of a bizarre question, member.

Mr LAST: It is pretty straightforward to me.

Mr RYAN: No, it is not. It is a bit of a bizarre question. In any event, as a key example of how Queensland Corrective Services is very agile around recruitment and delivering for the operational requirements for the custodial estate across Queensland, just last year at estimates—and this should allay your concerns, member for Burdekin—there was question on notice No. 13, which I assume was from the opposition, which asked how many staff joined and how many staff left, and the net growth was about 800.

Mr LAST: About 800?

Mr RYAN: Yes, 1,525 joined and 747 left, so it is about 800. They are significant numbers. That was a growth of about 800. Queensland Corrective Services delivered that last financial year. If you are asking whether Queensland Corrective Services has a record around delivering increased staff numbers, in 2020-21 it delivered growth of 800. That is a question on notice from last year.

I have every confidence that Queensland Corrective Services, through the commissioning process, will be able to onboard the appropriate number of staff for the new facility. The new facility obviously is big. It is now 1,500 beds because of the government's increased commitment at that site. We expect that at least 600 staff will be required when that centre is at full capacity. For those who have an awareness around how you commission a new facility, you do not put 1,500 prisoners in the centre on day one. There is a gradual ramp-up, and the gradual ramp-up will also match the ramp-up of staff that are onboarded.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I refer to the budget highlights on page 2 of the SDS, specifically the investment to support the safe operation of correctional centres. At the estimates hearing on 14 December 2020, your predecessor advised that he had been unable to put a dollar figure on repairing the damage caused at the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre by riots in September of that year. Do you have a dollar figure for repairing that damage to the centre?

Commissioner Stewart: From my recollection in relation to the overall figure, it was approximately \$900,000. However, I will determine to get the exact amount. It was \$985,000, member.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, will restitution be sought from the prisoners who participated in the riots recently at the Capricornia Correctional Centre? If so, how much was that damage?

Commissioner Stewart: The damage at Capricornia was approximately \$1.1 million. Restitution is a matter for the courts. In relation to both of those riots, I acknowledge the excellent work that our custodial officers did on both those occasions in order to bring the centres back to where they should be from a peace and good order perspective. They did excellent work. Capricornia in particular had a number of newer people who had just been trained, and they stood shoulder to shoulder with the more experienced people in order to do that. The work that was done in relation to restoring safety and good order was excellent.

In relation to restitution, it is a matter fundamentally for the courts. We refer to the CSIU within the Queensland Police Service, the Corrective Services Investigation Unit. My understanding is that they have charged approximately 64 individuals in relation to the riot in Capricornia and that they will go through a process of seeking restitution in relation to the damage.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, what was the cost of the more than 2,200 show bags or good-order bags that were distributed to prisoners at the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre in the aftermath of the riot?

Commissioner Stewart: Anything provided would have been within our budget and it would have been issued on the basis of ensuring good order within the centre. I would have to get the exact cost of what that was, but all I would say in relation to it is that, given the safety and security of the centre and given what the centre had just been through in order to maintain that level of safety and

security—as I understand it, it was provided from a number of people from the centres within the Wacol area—it was showing that the organisation was coming together to support the people at Arthur Gorrie in relation to it, again with the fundamental principle of restoring safety and good order within the centre.

Mr LAST: If you could come back to me with that figure, I would appreciate that.

CHAIR: Hang on a minute; there is a process. Minister, are you—

Mr RYAN: Yes, we will come back by the end of the session.

Mr LAST: Thank you, Chair. Minister, when did you become aware that good-order bags were being distributed and did you support that decision?

Mr RYAN: Member, you are referring to a matter of a couple of years ago. Give me a moment to reflect on that. I did obviously become aware of the matter post the distribution of those things to prisoners, but it is not for me to have an opinion around operational decisions of the correctional centre. The commissioner has just made it very clear that this was an operational decision around safety and, to be frank, member, it is not for you to have an opinion or me to have an opinion on it; it is for us to back experts, professionals, custodial officers of many years and the decisions they make to maintain safety and good order.

Mr LAST: Minister, can you explain, then, why it took over 18 months for Queensland Corrective Services staff who saved lives to receive recognition but it took just days for prisoners to be provided with show bags?

Mr RYAN: That is a bit insulting, I think, member, with respect.

Mr LAST: I think that is a fair enough question.

Mr RYAN: With respect, member, this was a new award—an award which was established relatively recently by the department. As with all honours and awards, it has to go through a process whereby people apply and put their names forward—the criteria has to be met. It was a very humbling experience for the commissioner and me to present those awards, particularly to the family of a deceased custodial officer who was involved in that particular response. Let's not mince words here: those officers who came from centres all over that Wacol precinct, whether it was the Arthur Gorrie centre or the other centres, saved lives that day.

Mr LAST: Absolutely they did. I am not disputing that.

Mr RYAN: They are worthy of recognition. For us to be able to recognise them on behalf of the community was certainly a very humbling experience. I understand that the commissioner has a bit of information to come back to you on. Also, Commissioner, you might want to say something about the recognition we were able to provide.

Commissioner Stewart: That was the first time that the commissioner's citation for that service was awarded. We awarded it not only to people from Arthur Gorrie but also to people from the Wacol precinct and Woodford. The pride when they received that was wonderful to be a part of, to recognise them for that meritorious service.

Whatever material was provided to the prisoners would have fundamentally been 100 per cent on the basis of safety given that at that time of the riots they had only just moved in to government management. If it was not for the case of being able to bring all our people together to do that then it would have been a much more difficult situation to deal with. The prisoners had been locked down for some considerable time because of COVID. Part of that was in order to bring the temperature down in the centre to ensure the safety and security of everyone within. Again I acknowledge the work that our custodial people do every day in these really complex and difficult circumstances and the work that they do monitoring prisoners and monitoring the temperature of the centre in order to make sure that things are safe.

I have just received advice in relation to the 2021-22 financial year: 670 custodial correctional officers were appointed and 390 was the attrition rate.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I refer to the budget highlights on page 2 of the SDS, specifically the investment to support the safe operation of correctional centres. At the estimates hearing on 12 August 2021, you advised that you would not be in a position to be able to provide what the funding would be when asked for the anticipated costs of the Capricornia Correctional Centre workplace cultural review. Now that the review has been completed, can you advise the committee today what the cost of that review was?

Commissioner Stewart: That was a really important review to do within Capricornia. On the culture within that centre, there had been a number of matters that had occurred over previous times in relation to Operation Linseed. The culture in the centre was at a low ebb. We placed a new general manager into the centre. We did the cultural review. It was done over a period and a lot of people came forward and participated in that. It did identify some issues fundamentally around bullying and things that potentially were occurring. Since that time, with the recommendations, we are in the process of implementing those recommendations.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, what was the cost of that review?

Commissioner Stewart: I will have it shortly but from recollection it was around \$140,000.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, the executive summary of the review recommends a workplace culture review six and 12 months after the report was prepared. Will those reviews be made public?

Commissioner Stewart: Unfortunately, the reviews contain a lot of private and personal information and the potential to identify people. We have released a public summary in relation to the reviews. That has been released in relation to the summary of the findings and the recommendations. But with the full detail—there is a risk that people potentially could be identified so we could not release the full report. The full cost was \$160,353.

Mr LAST: What was the cost of the review into the workplace culture at the Townsville Correctional Centre in 2020?

Commissioner Stewart: From recollection, again, I think that was around \$60,000 to \$80,000 but I will provide that shortly. Again, a number of recommendations were made in relation to the culture and a number of the recommendations have been addressed. The total cost was \$80,990.

The other thing that we have done from a cultural point of view is with our People Capability Command we have established a culture and wellbeing area within there for the whole of the organisation in order to support our people. *Corrections 2030* talks about the principles of safety, empowerment, excellence, respect and accountability and respect is one element that we are doing a lot of work on. We participate in the Working for Queensland survey across government and utilise the results of that in order to make sure that we are continuing to enhance and improve the culture within our organisation. Professionally, we are improving in many of those areas as an organisation.

Mr LAST: Minister, in 2019 your message in the official *Corrections 2030* document mentions that change will be driven by 'strengthening safety' yet, according to the SDS, prisoner-on-officer assaults were more than triple the target for the 2021-22 financial year. Why, three years later, are there still issues when it comes to the safety of staff?

Mr RYAN: Unfortunately this is an experience that is not uncommon across correctional centres, whether it is Queensland, Australia or around the world. The people who are in custody are there for a reason and sometimes the reasons that they are there for are that they are violent, they are volatile or they have complex needs. That in itself presents, obviously, a challenge and a risk to custodial officers.

I am very proud of the work that Queensland Corrective Services has been doing in positioning the agency to minimise risk to the best extent possible and also support the resourcing of custodial officers to manage a very complex prisoner cohort. Since the release of *Corrections 2030*, there has been significant investment in the resources available to custodial officers to enhance safety such as body worn cameras, load bearing vests and the deployment of chemical agents in high-security male prisons. In addition, additional training is being rolled out to custodial officers to support their work.

It has been said to me that custodial officers in Queensland are now amongst the best trained and best resourced in all of Australasia. That is something that I think Queensland Corrective Services should be very proud of. Obviously they will not rest there. We will continue to support the rollout of those additional resources and training to enhance safety. Some of the things in this year's budget include funding safety hatches. There is about \$6.7 million for safety hatches to be retrofitted into older style doors. There is also an additional \$2.5 million for about 500 body worn cameras to be rolled out.

We will continue to support custodial officers. It is a very volatile cohort that they are managing. We are obviously very grateful for their professionalism, training and expertise because they do a great job keeping the centres safe and wherever possible minimising the risk of violence in custody.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, the departmental income statement on page 7 of the SDS refers to the implementation of the *Hear her voice* report that aims to address domestic and family violence. When was recommendation 84 of the Sofronoff review fully implemented?

Commissioner Stewart: I start by acknowledging the work that has been done in relation to the Sofronoff review over the last period, particularly the importance of that piece of work across many areas, including the establishment of the Parole Board Queensland and a range of other matters. In addition to that, there are additional community corrections staff and also specialised clinical services and a whole range of things within the QPS. Specifically around domestic and family violence some of the work that we have been doing relates to perpetrator programs. Our people in the centres are also very alert to domestic and family violence. Over the period of last year, in excess of 200 incidents, fundamentally, of breaches where people were breaching their violence orders within centres were reported to the QPS. We are doing that.

We have also recently enhanced our information sharing with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in order to get more information about domestic and family violence so that we can manage our people in that regard. In relation to 84, it states—

The Assessment and Parole Unit should liaise with Queensland Police Service and investigate whether an offender had a DVO—

Mr LAST: You do not need to read the whole thing. I have it here.

Commissioner Stewart: The recommendation is complete on the basis that on 26 June QCS commenced automatically populating DVO information from the QWIC system into IOMS.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, when was recommendation 83 fully implemented?

Commissioner Stewart: With regard to recommendation 83, the recommendation is complete on the basis that amendments have been made to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act. Orders are made for a minimum of five years unless a court is satisfied a shorter order can be made and may be extended where necessary.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, as at today, if a prisoner who was the subject of a domestic violence order is released on parole, when and how are other parties to that domestic violence order notified?

Commissioner Stewart: Notified that the prisoner has been released?

Mr LAST: Yes.

Commissioner Stewart: Community corrections officers obviously are aware that this individual has been released on to parole. If the individual is a part of the high-risk process, that would be something that would be advised to other agencies through the high-risk team process which has been established which includes QPS and many other agencies in relation to that. Again, our community corrections officers case-manage the individuals and would advise anyone who would need to be advised from a prevention perspective.

Mr LAST: Thank you, Commissioner.

Ms BOLTON: Commissioner, page 8 of the SDS speaks about the 108 per cent utilisation for secure prisons. Given that a significant contributor to lowering incarceration numbers and decreasing reoffending is access to transitional accommodation—not only to be able to get on parole but also during parole—can you advise of anything that has been done in this space in terms of not only transitional but also more permanent housing?

Commissioner Stewart: As a result of the QPSR we were funded for re-entry services, and we have a number of agencies that provide those re-entry services to prisoners, both male and female, as they are approaching release to support them through a process of gaining accommodation, identification and many of the things they need on their release. We also have that capability when they are released to follow up to make sure they are. We have a number of programs for housing throughout the state, including the Next Step Home for women prisoners to find accommodation when they leave. We have another program around men who leave in the Moreton area, in Townsville, in Cairns and a number of areas across the state to find housing.

Of course, housing is one of the most critical things for people. Housing, employment and reconnection with family are the most critical areas, so we are very alive to that and work with many other housing agencies as well to do everything that we can to support that. Again, that is something that the Parole Board Queensland is always very interested in—that is, making sure people have safe housing to go to when they are released from prison.

Ms BOLTON: So that means that the issue of those who had previously reported they were not able to get parole because they could not establish and put down three stable addresses has been sorted?

Commissioner Stewart: We do the best we can with what we have in order to help people to get out through that process from a parole perspective. Of course, housing stock across the state is difficult and complex. I will not say that we can get that right 100 per cent of the time, but we certainly do have programs in place to address housing and to support people as they are released from prison.

Ms BOLTON: Wonderful. Thank you.

Mr BERKMAN: Minister, sticking with parole, it was last year I think that the government passed laws lowering quorum requirements for the Parole Board and giving itself a temporary extension to consider applications to deal with that backlog of something like 4,000 parole applications and suspensions in overcrowded prisons. Minister, how many people are currently waiting in Queensland prisons for a parole decision and how many of those have been waiting more than 180 days?

Mr RYAN: Thank you, member. There has been some recent advice provided to heads of jurisdiction, including the Chief Justice, from Queensland Corrective Services—and the president of the Parole Board is behind me, so I will invite him to say a few things in a few moments. There was an extraordinary time last year when, obviously, there were a number of impacts on the workforce because of COVID and a number of impacts on the correctional system because of COVID. There was also an unexpected increase in the number of parole applications around exceptional circumstances, so the government acted and funded those additional temporary Parole Board teams. We have extended those again in this year's budget, so teams 4 and 5 are going for another two years and there is the creation of a new sixth team for 12 months.

The latest advice I have on the time line—it is 120 days for a parole decision, unless more information is required—is that 100 per cent of applications are being decided within that time frame. If that is the measure of what is a backlog, the backlog is now zero because those decisions are being made within the legislative time frame. I will invite the president, if you do not mind, member, to add a little bit more to that.

Mr Byrne: As the minister has said, COVID and a number of factors impacted directly and substantially on the board's operations. To give you some idea, as at 30 June 2020 the board had 4,104 applications before it and in June 2021, moving forward a year, it had 4,403. In the 12 months since then we have reduced that by over 1,200, to 3,246, and we are totally within time frames for new applications.

There are other interesting figures the member might be interested in. When we commenced in 2017 with the old forums and the old funding, we had three operating teams and we conducted six meetings a week. Currently we have five operating boards or teams and we conduct 13 meetings a week. Since our inception we have considered some 19,400 applications and there has been an increase of 84 per cent in applications in the five years that Parole Board Queensland has been there. The board has held some 2,500 meetings in total, so we are trying and we are busy and we are grateful to the government for the resourcing that we are getting.

Mr BERKMAN: Great. Thanks very much.

Mr LAST: I refer to the performance statement on page 3 of the SDS, specifically the facility utilisation measure. Commissioner, could you please advise the built bed capacity at the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre as at 30 June 2021?

Commissioner Stewart: I thank the member for the question. As of 30 June 2021?

Mr LAST: Yes, 2021.

Commissioner Stewart: 2021, not 2022?

Mr LAST: 2021.

Commissioner Stewart: At 2022 for Arthur Gorrie the built bed is 1,002 on 30 June 2022. I would have to—

Mr LAST: 2021.

Commissioner Stewart:—get that in relation to 2021.

Mr LAST: I am happy for you to come back at the end of this session.

Mr RYAN: We will come back at the end of the time.

CHAIR: Thanks, Minister.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, at the estimates on 12 August 2021 you advised that you intended to build 500 bunk beds in the 2021-22 financial year. How many bunk beds were built and how many were installed at the Capricornia Correctional Centre?

Commissioner Stewart: I thank the member for the question and again acknowledge the support in relation to the building of bunk beds and the importance of getting people off the floor and on mattresses across the state. In November 2021, in round 2, we installed 170 additional beds from funding, 497 in June 2022 and 150 in September 2022. To get the breakdown of where those bunk beds have been installed—

Mr LAST: Is that a total figure across the state, is it?

Commissioner Stewart: Yes.

Mr LAST: I would appreciate, Mr Chair, if I could have the breakdown.

CHAIR: Just give them one second, please.

Commissioner Stewart: We will have to come—

Mr RYAN: We will get the breakdown. We do have it. We will just get it.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, were there any cells where bunk beds were installed and the existing beds were not removed?

Commissioner Stewart: The existing beds—

Mr LAST: That were in the cell and were not removed. When you install the bunk beds are they in addition to the existing bed that is already in the room?

Commissioner Stewart: That is correct, yes.

Mr RYAN: It is not a traditional bunk bed. It is not a thing you wheel in with two mattresses. It is a bed you install above the existing bed facility. The existing bed remains and then the bunk gets installed above it.

Commissioner Stewart: There are complexities around—

Mr LAST: Which would make the capacity of each cell how many?

Commissioner Stewart: Two. We go from someone in a built bed and someone with a mattress on the floor to putting a bunk in and taking the mattress off the floor. There are only two people occupying the cell. Again, it is around the engineering and making sure it is safe from an airflow and fire rating point of view. It is a complex process of building a second bed within the unit. From a capacity point of view it is the best way to move forward.

CHAIR: I will hand over to the member for Caloundra.

Mr HUNT: Minister, I refer to page 71 of Budget Paper No. 4 which identifies a further \$3 million in funding for additional bunk beds. Can you please provide an update on Queensland's bunk bed program and any benefits that this program is delivering?

Mr RYAN: I am very pleased to have the opportunity to reinforce what the commissioner said about our bunk bed program. It is a very important program and is increasing correctional capacity across the state. To date we have delivered 2,600 bunk beds under our bunk bed program. It is a multimillion dollar program. Just out of our round 3 funding, which was \$8 million, \$5 million has been expended in the last financial year and delivered about 497 bunk beds. The balance of \$3 million will deliver 150 bunk beds during this financial year. They should be installed by the end of the year. All up, out of the \$8 million almost 650 bunks will be installed.

It is important to understand what goes on with the installation of bunks. It is not like what people might expect—you are not rolling in a frame with a mattress on it. It is quite a significant and important process. They have to be compliant with the safe cell design—that is, to remove ligature points. That takes a lot of engineering and includes the use of pick proof sealant. Obviously they are bolted to a concrete wall. That takes significant engineering and reinforcement. They also have to comply with fire regulations and guidelines. In a number of instances it requires the upgrade of ventilation and the alteration of air flows to ensure that that is all compliant as well. In addition, there also has to be prisoner amenity such as storage opportunities for the prisoner in the cell.

It is a big and important program, but it is delivering the extra capacity. It is an important way that we are able to maintain safety and security at the centres as well. By putting prisoners in a bunk rather than have them sleep on the floor enhances the opportunity for custodial officers to ensure the safety and good order of the centres. I am very impressed with the program to date.

With the commissioner I had the opportunity to visit one of the manufacturers of the bunk beds. They are based at Brendale in the Strathpine area. It is an Indigenous company called Bridgeman. They were successful in one of the tenders last year for the supply and installation of some of the bunk beds. It was a great visit, was it not commissioner. I was very impressed by the work that they had done.

They told us that the bunk bed contract allowed them to create 17 new jobs at their business and provided employment opportunities for people who had previously been in custody. Three past offenders got a job. We spoke to one of them. He spoke about how his life has obviously changed since being in custody. He sees it as an important contribution back to the community that he is now able to support the expansion of capacity in correctional centres by being part of the bunk bed program.

Member, you might be interested to know that once we have finished the bunk bed program and delivered the new prison at Gatton we will have delivered more than 5,300 additional beds across the correctional system since our government was elected. They are big numbers.

Mr HUNT: Minister, I refer to page 115 of Budget Paper No. 4 which identifies \$20.2 million over four years to enhance the Parole Board of Queensland. Could you provide further details on how this funding is being used to enhance the board's operations?

Mr RYAN: It gives me an opportunity to acknowledge the president, his deputy presidents as well as all members of the Parole Board, be they professional members, staff members or community members who have a very important job. Their decisions are around community safety. That is the priority. Essentially, the primary consideration for them is how to enhance community safety through appropriate decisions around parole.

This year's budget supports enhanced resourcing for the Parole Board. In fact, it essentially means that the Parole Board budget has doubled since it was created five years ago. That additional resourcing, as I mentioned earlier, will support the ongoing work of the fourth and fifth temporary board operating teams as well as establish a sixth team.

It will also fund some important work around supporting the operations of the Parole Board, including the appointment, for the first time, of a chief administration officer. This will support the work that is being done at the Parole Board to enhance their processes. A working group will support them through some refinements of processes. Obviously after a number of years of operating from a standing start there are lessons that you can learn and ways that you can support efficient and effective parole decision-making. Again, well done to the president and his team for the work that they have done. It is difficult work, but I know they take it very seriously and responsibly. This government will back them with those resources to make appropriate decisions.

Ms BUSH: Commissioner, I refer to page 115 of Budget Paper No. 4 which identifies additional funding to improve training for community corrections officers. Are you able to provide some further detail to the committee around the training to be delivered and how that new training will benefit the CCOs and the people of Queensland?

Commissioner Stewart: If I could give a brief introduction in relation to that and, Minister, through you, Acting Deputy Commissioner Samantha Newman from Community Corrections and Specialist Operations will be able to provide more detail. I acknowledge the work out at the academy of the community corrections training team. Fundamentally, that is one of the QPSR benefits that we have been able to implement over the last period of time. They do an excellent job out at the academy. The training is getting better for our community corrections officers. I will hand over to Acting Deputy Commissioner Newman.

Deputy Commissioner Newman: I am very pleased to be able to speak this afternoon about the excellent work that is being undertaken by our training and project teams. I thank the minister for his comments in his opening speech with respect to this training.

The Queensland Parole System Review report prepared by Mr Walter Sofronoff QC, as he was then, considered the training requirements for community corrections officers and recommended that the training be reviewed and reformulated in partnership with the university to ensure it was contemporary, provided ongoing professional and practice development and was designed to ensure that all new officers received best practice training in case management before they were allocated a case load. The review and associated investment of funding provided the foundation for the evolution of professional training and development for our community corrections officers. Through the Queensland parole system reforms, Queensland Corrective Services joined with university partners to review, redesign and develop world-class, standardised and evidence based training for our officers.

A dedicated community corrections and specialist operations training team was established at the Queensland Corrective Services Academy with a dedicated manager to lead a high-performing team with the skills and capabilities required for current and future training delivery. Whilst the new training program was being developed, the team redesigned the existing training package to ensure our community corrections officers are equipped with the skills to perform their role whilst awaiting delivery of the new curriculum.

A community corrections training project was also established to lead the review and delivery of the new curriculum. A new world-class training system has been developed in partnership with the Swinburne University of Technology, providing front-end and continuing office based training on core skills and practice along with specialised online training.

As the minister has mentioned, the training contains specific modules focused on family and intimate partner violence, sexual offending, working with individuals who misuse substances, working with First Nations people, as well as trauma informed and gender responsive practice. The new suite of training will enable our officers to deliver evidence based management and rehabilitation of offenders, with community safety being the highest priority.

As part of the Queensland parole system reforms, Queensland Corrective Services introduced practice leaders—specific roles to provide ongoing practice support to community corrections officers across the state. These roles will further enable the embedding of the new curriculum with new and current officers and will provide ongoing support in the effective case management of individuals in the community.

We are very pleased to have our partners from the Swinburne University of Technology with us in Queensland at the moment providing this new suite of world-class best practice training to our training team, practice leaders and officers from our Murrighgun Cultural Centre in preparation for rollout across the state. This is a significant milestone and is just the start of what will be transformational change for our workforce and services we provide to the Queensland community.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our officers who work in the challenging community corrections environment and to the training and project teams who have worked collaboratively and comprehensively with our partners in the development of this exceptional training.

In QCS our people are certainly our greatest asset. The work our people do each day impacts the lives of the people in our custody and care and under our supervision, and ultimately supports safer communities. I would like to acknowledge and thank all of our QCS officers across the state for the important work they do each day to keep our community safe.

Mr HUNT: Minister, I refer with quite some enthusiasm to the \$861 million in funding to deliver a 1,500-bed correctional facility at the Southern Queensland Correctional Precinct near Gatton. Can you please outline and provide an update on this project including the building progress and any innovative design features that are planned for the new facility?

Mr RYAN: It is an exciting project for Corrective Services, not only from the point of view of scale but also from the point of view of the thinking that is going into the operating model and the design. This will be a 'modern in every sense' correctional centre which will provide correctional capacity of 1,500 now with the funding boost. We added about \$200 million in this year's state budget to increase the bed numbers to 1,500—about 500 more. Not only will the uplift be important; so are some of the design features that are going into the correctional centre to support better rehabilitation outcomes as well as better safety outcomes. Some of the things we are going to see at the centre are dedicated mental health spaces, dedicated alcohol and other drug spaces as well as a transitional process from secure to residential—all with the latest thinking about how best to get good rehabilitation outcomes from prisoners so that we can set them up for success when they are released.

I brought some of the key design features in. They are not props, but I invite members to have a look at them later on. They are at the end of the table. This correctional centre will have some interesting and unique features. The first is the use of new, modern glass. Toughened laminated security glass will be put into the cell windows and prisoner day rooms to create more natural light, which the research shows enhances good behaviour as well as enhances safety outcomes. This new toughened laminated security glass is 22 millimetres. It has interlayers which have an enhanced robust security solution. It is quite impressive. I do invite members to have a look.

We are also incorporating anti-climb mesh into the centre to promote safety and secure containment. Also, sound-reducing panelling battens and acoustic fabric will be used throughout the centre. As a former custodial officer, member for Caloundra, you know that if you are able to limit the disruptive noises within a correctional centre you are also able to enhance safety and maintain order, so that is very important. There is also the latest when it comes to multipurpose cuffs and meal hatches and air supply grills which restrict the ability of fluids being emitted from the cell towards a custodial officer who might be trying to access the cell or might even be just walking by.

All in all, there will be not only more capacity but also the latest design and the latest when it comes to thinking about rehabilitation. We are on track with construction. Major works are due to finish at the end of 2023. Then the commissioning and onboarding will happen in the first half of 2024. We are on track, weather permitting. The construction team are making very good progress and it is impressive to see.

CHAIR: Minister, I am conscious that we are coming to the end of this session. Are there any questions that were taken on notice that you could answer now?

Mr RYAN: I understand the commissioner has some information.

Commissioner Stewart: In relation to the bags that were provided to the prisoners, the cost was approximately \$22 per bag. They consisted of what is on the buy-up list for prisoners anyway. Given what had just occurred in relation to the riots over the days, it was a way of ensuring that the prisoners had some degree of food and capability within that. Again, it was around the temperature and the safety. There are approximately 1,000 prisoners there at \$22 a bag.

CHAIR: I think there was another question in relation to the breakdown of the number of bunk beds.

Mr LAST: The breakdown of the number of bunk beds in each centre across the state.

Mrs GERBER: The figure that was given was a statewide figure.

Mr LAST: Yes. The figure that you gave me was statewide.

Mr RYAN: Yes, 497 was a statewide figure. We can give you the specifics.

Commissioner Stewart: There are 183 bunk beds at Capricornia since the expansion. We will clarify in relation to your specific question about bunk beds across the centres. At Arthur Gorrie there were 1,002 beds as of 30 June 2022 and 1,002 beds as of 30 June 2021.

Mr RYAN: I do not want to prolong things but, if the member is interested, we can do the breakdown of just the 497—or do you want the breakdown of all of them that we have delivered?

Mr LAST: Absolutely.

Mr RYAN: We will do all of them. We will do the breakdown of the 2,600. We have that and I will be able to get it to you by the end of the day.

CHAIR: Minister, is there anything else you wish to add before we close the session?

Mr RYAN: Yes. Firstly, I would like to thank the committee for its interest in this portfolio matter. It is very important. Obviously the work that people do in corrective services helps contribute to community safety outcomes, and we are very grateful for their contribution.

I thank the commissioner and his team, led by his chief of staff, Steve Scougall. I also thank the deputy commissioners, who were pretty much off the hook today: Deputy Commissioner James Koulouris, Deputy Commissioner Gary McCahon and Acting Deputy Commissioner Sam Newman. That was a very good answer, Sam. Thank you.

I also thank the corrective services estimates team, led by Joel Ioannou, as well as all the other people who assisted with that work including the ministerial liaison team in my office, Jared Fielding and Melissa Hunt. Once again, I thank everyone in Queensland Corrective Services for what they do keeping us safe.

CHAIR: The committee will now adjourn for a break. We will recommence at 4.15 pm with the examination of estimates for fire and emergency services.

Proceedings suspended from 4.00 pm to 4.15 pm.



CHAIR: Welcome back, Minister and officials. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of Fire and Emergency Services open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

The visiting member is Mr Dale Last MP, member for Burdekin. Minister, if you wish you may commence with an opening statement of no more than five minutes, after which there will be some questions for you.

Mr RYAN: Chair, in relation to the last session, just to close everything off so we do not have any further matters, bunk beds installed across the state: Arthur Gorrie, 86; Borallon, 244; Brisbane, 405; Brisbane women's, 109; Capricornia, 183; Lotus Glen, 317; Maryborough, 336; Townsville men's, 326; Townsville women's, 56; Wolston 516; and Woodford, 468.

I would like to begin by wishing everyone a very happy Rural Fire Service Week. I note that tonight—what a coincidence that it has coordinated with our estimates day—the Kurilpa, Story and Victoria bridges as well as the Reddycliff Place sculptures outside the casino and Brisbane Square will be lit up in yellow to honour the tens of thousands of Rural Fire Service volunteers who help keep the community safe. What a fitting tribute that is to them.

The Palaszczuk government is delivering a safer community by supporting Queensland Fire and Emergency Services with a record more than \$900 million budget. With the additional \$38 million boost to our volunteer services, this budget is a nine per cent increase on last year and a massive 39 per cent increase on the 2014-15 budget.

This budget formalises the commencement of a new multiyear fleet build program for the Rural Fire Service and the Fire and Rescue Service, with contracts already in place more than two years in advance. In addition, last financial year saw the completion of new and replacement facilities at Maleny, Gracemere, Rainbow Beach, Rosewood, and Charters Towers. This record budget delivers funding to progress new and upgraded facilities which service the communities of Airlie Beach, Caloundra South, Drayton, Greater Springfield, Gympie South, Hervey Bay, Loganlea, Lowood, Maryborough, Moreton Bay, Mount Cotton and South Townsville.

This year Queenslanders once again saw the devastating effects of Mother Nature with the South-East Queensland rainfall and flooding event. This event saw Queensland Fire and Emergency Services conduct more than 18,000 damage assessments, more than 700 water rescues and almost 15,000 requests for state emergency service assistance. This resulted in more than 58,000 operational hours for our orange army, the State Emergency Service, but sadly we lost one of our own. State Emergency Service volunteer Merryl Dray lost her life in the line of duty. The heartfelt sympathies of myself, the Commissioner and all Queenslanders once again go to her family and friends. Queenslanders are eternally grateful for Merryl's selfless dedication to keeping our community safe.

As the committee would be aware, the Inspector-General Emergency Management is currently conducting a review into the flooding event. The Inspector-General has received more than 240 written submissions and conducted 13 community forums with a combined 460 attendees. This government is committed to keeping Queenslanders safe, and I look forward to receiving the Inspector-General's report later this month.

It is important to remember that the work Queensland Fire and Emergency Services does to keep the community safe in the face of natural disasters does not stop when the weather eases. Our world-class team works hard behind closed doors year-round researching and making the preparations needed for what Mother Nature will throw at us next. They do this through projects like the State Disaster Risk Report and the Severe Wind Hazard Assessment for Queensland. These important tools are now available on the Disaster Management website. These reports have already been utilised this year throughout, and in the lead-up to, severe weather events to inform decision-making and planning.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to thank all of our emergency services officers, staff and volunteers who did what they do best through the recent disasters and, more broadly, every day of every year—that is, working tirelessly to keep us all safe. The commissioner and I are now available to answer any questions the committee might have.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I hand over to the deputy chair.

Mrs GERBER: The member for Burdekin has a few questions.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I refer to staffing on page 5 of the SDS. Including transfers from the Public Safety Business Agency, how many FTE first-response firefighters joined QFES during the 2021-22 financial year and how many left?

Commissioner Leach: As at 19 June 2022, there were 3,665.38 FTE paid staff. That equates to 5,445 paid headcount, which is higher than our FTE number. That is predominantly on account of our auxiliary workforce that is represented as 0.1 of an FTE. We have 1,899 auxiliary firefighters who are considered to be 0.1 of an FTE. That boosts our FTE numbers to 189.9. In relation to the numbers of staff who have left, as at 30 June 2022 we have recruited 145 firefighters, which is part of our ongoing commitment to the 357 firefighter program. In relation to those who have left, I will find the exact number for you. To give you some indicator, we have around 80 retirements or resignations per year from our paid firefighting force.

Mr LAST: Will you come back to me with that figure?

Commissioner Leach: We will get that number for you, yes.

CHAIR: Is that okay, Minister?

Mr RYAN: Yes.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, the minister has advised via a question on notice that on average there are 27 overtime shifts every day in the south-eastern region. Is this an indication that there are staffing shortages in the south-eastern region?

Commissioner Leach: The shifts that you refer to are part of keeping all of our rosters filled in a 24/7 service such as ours. We have a cohort of staff to maintain the rosters that we have across all of our fire stations, and we have an additional cohort of staff who provide for filling of the rosters to cater for all of the terms and conditions under the certified agreement. It is not unusual to run overtime to fill rosters like that. On average in an urban fire service across Australia, you can expect to be filling around 10 per cent of your shifts on any given day with overtime. That is due to short-term sicknesses, planned leave, training activities—whatever that might be. We are relatively consistent with that. With the additional 357 firefighters that we are bringing into the service, a cohort of those are additional resources to fill our roster lines. They are not being deployed to open new fire stations; they are being used to bolster the roster lines that we currently have.

Mr LAST: Given what you have just stated, what was the total overtime bill for firefighters across the state last financial year?

Commissioner Leach: As at 30 June 2022, QFES expenditure on overtime for full-time paid firefighters is \$29.94 million. That overtime expenditure falls into three broad categories. Operational response was \$6.81 million. That includes costs incurred for overtime attendance or support to operational incidents such as fire, road crash rescues, swiftwater rescues, fire investigation, chemical incidents, bushfire and severe weather events. That figure is up a little this year given the severe weather season that we have had and the fact we have been deploying swiftwater rescue firefighters as part of that response.

A further \$19.05 million was for staff shortages, which includes costs incurred for replacing staff on all types of leave, staff seconded to support specialist projects and other administrative requirements to maintain or improve frontline services. The final cohort of that overtime spend is training, which is \$4.08 million. They are the costs incurred for the backfill of staff to attend training and to release staff to go to the training college as instructors to deliver training and training exercises.

Mr LAST: On the basis of that overtime bill, have you requested funding for more first-response firefighters?

Commissioner Leach: Not specifically outside of the government's election commitment around the 357 additional firefighters. As I said, a cohort of those will be used to bolster the existing roster lines that we have. That will give us a pool of firefighters to fill the roster lines that we have and meet all of our obligations under the certified agreement.

Mr LAST: If I could move on to SES volunteers, and I refer to the percentage of SES volunteers who meet minimal operating requirements on page 3 of the SDS. What are the minimum training standards and checks before a volunteer can be tasked to an incident that may involve working in floodwaters—for example, crossing a flooded road?

Commissioner Leach: Thank you for the question. Our SES volunteers are trained and equipped to help their communities across a range of functions. That includes land search, storm damage operations, flood boat rescue, road crash rescue and vertical rescue. The training packages are tasked around those specific skill sets. There is a range of induction and basic level training that is provided. All of the SES training is provided in accordance with our registered training organisation status and it meets national accreditation standards for that.

The 2022-23 budget includes \$1.4 million to equip SES with swiftwater rescue equipment and level 1 training. There is a component of money going to rolling out additional level 1 training for this year. There is also flood boat operator training and personal protective clothing. I am looking for a further breakdown on the training for you.

In relation to SES volunteers, they completed 159,445 operational hours and there were 315,404 hours of preparation and training ready for the severe weather season we have just had. At 30 June 2022 there were 210 SES volunteers trained in level 1 swiftwater rescue, if that helps.

Mr LAST: Are you aware of any incidents in the last 12 months where a volunteer has undertaken duties or been dispatched to a tasking where they have been required to undertake duties they are not qualified for?

Commissioner Leach: I am not personally aware of that, but it could potentially occur. Whilst we have robust systems in place to make sure everyone who joins as an SES volunteer is inducted into the organisation appropriately and provided with minimum level training, it is possible during large deployment—such as the severe weather season we have gone through—that a member who was not trained may have been deployed. Having said that, SES deploy as a team, so I would be confident that there would be trained people on the shift or on the crew who could supervise a member.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I refer to the department highlights on page 1 of the SDS—namely, that the department will continue to work on ‘addressing relevant recommendations from the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements’. As you would be aware, the President of the Rural Fire Brigades Association, Ian Pike, made a submission to the royal commission and the association made a submission to the KPMG review. Can you direct me to where funding to implement the recommendations of the KPMG review is in the budget?

Commissioner Leach: The KPMG review, which was part of the independent review that the government announced, has been provided to government and will be considered by government at a point in time. We have not made specific provisions budget-wise for that because we do not know what the outcomes of that would be. However, we would anticipate it will include things like building our capacity and capability as an organisation to ensure that we are equipped for the changing climate that we are seeing here in Queensland; and making sure that our volunteers and our staff are trained and equipped to deal with more intense, more frequent operations into the future.

Specifically over four years from 2021-22 we have \$10.81 million and \$1.27 million per annum ongoing which is supporting implementation of the Australian warning system and the Australian fire danger rating system in Queensland. That money will also be used to improve our capability in the collection analysis of natural disaster risk information.

Mr LAST: Minister, at the estimates hearing on 14 December 2020 you described the KPMG review into the structure of QFES as ‘in the best interests of Queenslanders’. Given the review is ‘in the best interests of Queenslanders’, when will you release the review and when will you provide funding to implement its recommendations?

Mr RYAN: Everything that the government does is about the best interests of Queenslanders. Obviously there are some big pieces of work which take time to get right. That time to get right is important when you are talking about structures of departments, how you might fund them and how you might build capacity. Certainly the government is taking the work that has been done around the independent review very seriously. That work will also be informed by the inspector-general’s work. His report is due at the end of the month.

Notwithstanding that—and the commissioner highlighted some of the investment already—the government is acting to enhance capability of the department and the personnel within it. The commissioner has already mentioned some funding allocations to help boost capacity in light of the royal commission’s recommendations: \$10.8 million over four years, \$39 million over four years, \$15 million over five years, \$16 million over four years—all of that is a capability uplift. Also in this year’s budget notwithstanding that government is still taking a very serious approach to how best we can enhance the work of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, we have provided a big funding boost. That funding boost includes \$20 million for the State Emergency Service including additional staff, which was very well received by SES volunteers and personnel, a \$10 million boost for the Rural Fire Service and an \$8 million boost for Marine Rescue volunteers. Government can be considered to be measured and sensible around considering the recommendations of any review. At the appropriate time the government will make an announcement.

Mr LAST: I will hand over to the member for Scenic Rim.

Mr KRAUSE: Minister, the Boonah auxiliary fire station, built in 1959 and, as I understand it, one of Queensland’s oldest, needs upgrading to improve facilities for fires and especially to house modern equipment and to provide adequate training facilities. I understand it is on the forward capital works program. It is not funded this year. When can we expect it to be funded for upgrade?

Mr RYAN: I know that this is a particular project you are interested in, just like you were interested in the Beaudesert Police Station, which the government was very pleased to support. The government will always take advice from its agencies around operational priorities and the projects which need to be expedited. I know Queensland Fire and Emergency Services has had a look at the requirements around Boonah station. I will hand over to the commissioner to provide some advice.

Commissioner Leach: The Scenic Rim electorate has eight auxiliary fire and rescue stations. We have staffing of an inspector, a full-time station officer and part-time auxiliary firefighters. In relation to the Boonah Fire Station that you mentioned, we are monitoring that as part of our capital works program each year. The Boonah auxiliary fire and rescue station currently services a population of 3,185 people. The station responded to 112 total responses. In 58 of those they were first in attendance at those emergencies, so the 112 involves multiple responses by other agencies. The median distance they travelled for a job was 12.1 kilometres. The utilisation rate is relatively low at 0.9 per cent. That is the amount of time they spend on actual firefighting or response duties. Their utilisation ranking sits at 66 out of 161 stations.

Having said that, we are watching Boonah and other locations like Boonah across the state very closely. We refresh our capital works program each year. If the risk has increased or if we are seeing a change in circumstances in those locations, somewhere like Boonah can come on to the capital works program quite quickly. We prioritise that on an annual basis.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I refer to the capital program on page 5 of the SDS and the funding of essential operational equipment. It is well documented that when using self-contained breathing apparatus the communications firefighters use is substandard and there are allegations that firefighters have been directed to turn off distress-signalling units when communicating in what can be life-threatening situations. Is the provision of suitable communications equipment for firefighters wearing self-contained breathing apparatus included in the funding of essential operational equipment in the 2022-23 budget?

Commissioner Leach: Thank you for the question. Before I answer it I will provide the information in answer to a previous question. I am advised that 78 permanent fire and rescue staff left Queensland Fire and Emergency Services during 2021-22. That figure includes resignations and retirements.

Mr LAST: Thank you.

Commissioner Leach: In relation to the question you ask around our radio systems, you would be referring to the operation of our digital radio network in noisy environments?

Mr LAST: Correct.

Commissioner Leach: We are aware of that issue. That is an issue that affects digital radio systems worldwide. We are watching closely developments out of the United States and Europe around improving the performance in those environments. We looked at a range of options in conjunction with our key stakeholders around this very important issue for firefighter safety.

We have recently concluded a trial of an in-helmet communications system. We did have similar systems in the past, but we went back to the market to see what is available now. It involves bone induction technology and boom mic technology that can be used to improve the operation of the radio system in noisy environments. As part of trialling that equipment, it became clear that it was not fit for purpose with our existing range of structural firefighting helmets. Given that our structural helmets are almost at end of life, we took the opportunity to go to market to source a solution for both new helmets and in-helmet communications technology.

We ran a trial of that across the state. We had around 60 helmets and communications devices tested. The results of that trial have been assessed and we are now about to move into the procurement stage for the replacement of our helmets. We will also introduce the communications technology as part of that rollout.

Mr LAST: Do you have the funding in this year's budget to purchase those helmets and that technology?

Commissioner Leach: That will be catered for in accordance with our capital budget, yes.

Mr LAST: Thank you. Commissioner, I refer to the capital program on page 5 of the SDS, particularly the delay in fleet build programs. In their submission to the KPMG review, the Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland states that 60 per cent of rural fire brigades do not have a fire truck, or an appliance. How many brigades that do not currently have an appliance will be provided with one under the current budget and when will these vehicles be delivered?

Commissioner Leach: Thank you for the question. To provide some context, we have nearly 1,400 rural fire brigades across Queensland, and they are categorised a number of different ways. Some brigades are categorised as primary producer brigades. These are brigades that do not have a firefighting vehicle. They are landowners who use their own equipment such as tractors, scarifiers and

graders to create firebreaks around fires. They are predominantly in rural and regional parts of Queensland. Then we have other brigades—truck brigades, or village brigades as we call them. There are around 500 of those.

In 2019-20, there were 16 vehicles and appliances delivered to the Rural Fire Service. In 2020-21, 28 vehicles and appliances were delivered. As at 30 June 2022, 38 Rural Fire Service appliances have been delivered from the 2021-22 program. Currently, 28 Rural Fire Service appliances are scheduled to carry over for delivery into 2022-23, and we deferred \$3.39 million from the 2021-22 budget to cover that off. The reason for that is that, like organisations that operate large fleets, we have been significantly impacted by global supply chain issues. We have a significant backlog of cab chassis that we are awaiting delivery of, so we are working with our suppliers and manufacturers to try to counter that. For example, we are working with our suppliers around potentially constructing bodies and stockpiling these while we wait for cab chassis to arrive so that we can then assemble and dispatch them. Certainly global supply chain issues have impacted our build program.

Mr LAST: Thank you, Commissioner. Again in regard to the capital program on page 5, the Rural Fire Brigade Association submission to the KPMG review states—

Many of the fire sheds that are owned by QFES are not connected to electricity, running water or have a toilet.

Commissioner, are you aware of any plan to ensure all Rural Fire Service volunteers have access to facilities that are not of a Third World standard?

Commissioner Leach: Thank you for the question. We are aware of some stations that do not meet a minimum standard. We do have minimum standards, as set down in our brigade manual. The sourcing of brigade stations is often done through grant money received by brigades and they undertake the construction of a shed in accordance with the minimum standards. Sometimes that money will not stretch to putting all of the basic facilities in there. We have an uplift in this year's budget whereby we are doing a stocktake of that. In 2022-23 the government has committed an additional \$1 million of recurrent funding over a five-year period for Rural Fire Service facilities. We will do a stocktake of those facilities and if it means doing a program to perhaps put in a concrete floor or to install toilet facilities or maybe a kitchenette, to bring them up to the minimum standard, we will start rolling that out.

Mr LAST: Do you have a total cost to bring those facilities up to the standard you are talking about?

Commissioner Leach: I do not, because it will be dependent on a brigade-by-brigade analysis of what they have and what will need to be done to be brought up to a standard.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I refer to the departmental highlights on page 1 of the SDS, namely, 'increasing the skills and experience of Rural Fire Service volunteers'. Given that your signature appears on it, it is fair to say that you are fully aware of the details of the Rural Fire Service Volunteer Charter. Do you agree that under the heading 'QFES Commitment to its Volunteers', QFES provides a commitment to 'work in a timely manner and in a collaborative way with the brigades and volunteers' representatives on matters which affect brigades and volunteers'.

Commissioner Leach: Yes.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, when did you receive a copy of the KPMG review on the structure of QFES?

Commissioner Leach: I received a copy of the KPMG review as a member of the steering committee. The steering committee was comprised of members from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and, as the commissioner, I was a member of that committee. I received a copy of that as a member of that committee prior to Christmas last year, so I have had the opportunity to look at that. Of course, that is a cabinet-in-confidence document at the moment which government will consider in due course.

Mr LAST: Given that commitment to timely consultation, has a copy of the findings of the KPMG review into the structure of QFES been provided to any Rural Fire Service brigade, volunteer or volunteers representative?

Commissioner Leach: No.

Mr LAST: Minister, at the estimates hearing on 12 August 2021, the commissioner advised that the terms of the contract for the KPMG review were a 'commercial-in-confidence matter'. Given that your government finally released the details of Wellcamp last week—another commercial-in-confidence matter—will you advise the cost of that review?

Mr RYAN: It was commercial-in-confidence at the time because the report was ongoing, but I am happy to provide that information. It was \$465,000.

Mr LAST: Minister, I refer to the department highlights on page 11 of the SDS. According to question on notice No. 308 you were briefed on the KPMG review into the structure of QFES shortly after it was presented to the review steering committee in November 2021. Why is there a commitment to report on the progress of implementation of the IGEM review but no mention of implementing the KPMG review?

Mr RYAN: I am sorry, I do not understand the question. Could you ask it again?

Mr LAST: Why is there a commitment to report on the progress of implementation of the IGEM review but no mention of implementing the KPMG review?

Mr RYAN: There is a deadline for the IGEM review, which is 31 August. The advice that I have from the IGEM is that he will meet that deadline.

Mr LAST: He will meet that deadline?

Mr RYAN: That is the advice I have got from IGEM.

Mr LAST: And the KPMG review?

Mr RYAN: The KPMG review is being considered by government.

Ms BOLTON: Commissioner, I go back to the response to question on notice No. 20 regarding the ICT capabilities of the QEOC in connecting with those early-alert monitors on bridges and that information will go in real time to council and their disaster management teams, Google Maps, Apple et cetera.

Commissioner Leach: Thank you for the question. The two projects you talk about are not linked. The upgrade to the Queensland Emergency Operations Centre is around upgrading all of the technology in there for the operations of that centre. That includes audiovisual hardware, videoconferencing solutions, and hardware and software upgrades of equipment that is past its used-by date. The important project you talk about, which is around flood warning implementation, sits with another department. It is administered by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority as part of the resilience program for floods in Queensland. There is technology which the Bureau of Meteorology is responsible for, and in some circumstances local government. That information is collected by local government. We have access to that sort of flood warning information data. That data is used to inform hydrology planning. We use that for predictive flood mapping purposes. The network you refer to is being expanded all of the time and is a good outcome for planning purposes and for community safety at the end of the day.

Ms BOLTON: My question is that there is capacity in this upgrade to integrate in real time so there are not lags. Because it has already been done elsewhere, when the water rises it sends the message straight to the cloud and it goes to Google Maps et cetera, but it really needs to go to all agencies. My question is: does the ICT upgrade have the capabilities?

Commissioner Leach: The technology that we are replacing in the Queensland Emergency Operations Centre is only one part of the overall technology we have there. The answer is yes, we can integrate the information you are talking about into our broader systems—not specifically this program that we are replacing, but the answer is yes.

Ms BOLTON: On page 2, there is \$8 million for marine rescue services. What proportion is being provided to frontline service delivery for our coastguards?

Commissioner Leach: Thank you for the question. The government announced increased funding of \$8 million for the Marine Rescue Service, \$5 million of which will be directed to the Vessel Replacement Program. That will bolster the \$17.38 million that has already been announced for vessel replacements. This will enable accelerated replacement of rescue vehicles in areas of greatest need. The remaining \$3 million in additional funding will contribute to support grants for marine rescue units. That will help them address rising costs of service delivery and drive the Marine Rescue Reform Program. The \$3 million is really around helping them to offset costs: electricity, utilities, fuel and a whole range of things.

Ms BOLTON: Essentially, they are still having to buy their own uniforms?

Commissioner Leach: Some of that \$3 million will assist in offsetting some of those costs for them.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you.

Mr RYAN: I think we are out of opposition time; this will be government time. If I can add as well, of that additional money—the \$5 million—that will go towards the Vessel Replacement Program over and above what we have committed this year. To put that in context, what we have committed this year will put in place contracts for about 10 vessels—about fifty-fifty with Volunteer Marine Rescue and Coast Guard. That \$5 million will be on top of that, which is exciting. In addition, with that \$3 million, which is about supporting capacity and capability, there are the direct support grants which every group is entitled to, which is \$10,000. The Coast Guard in the member's area will be able to claim that \$10,000, which is a lot of Bunnings sausage sizzles or raffle tickets in the chook raffle, and will be able to put that towards that capability uplift. This is all part of the transition and the journey that we have towards the legislated single integrated service where eventually we get to the point where a lot of that local fundraising that the groups have to do is not needed because the government is there to support them.

Ms BOLTON: To clarify: that \$10,000 is on top of the \$17,000 that they used to get, or going back in time?

Mr RYAN: That is the direct support grant; that is part of the boost.

Ms BOLTON: Wonderful. Thank you.

CHAIR: The last question is for the member for Maiwar. You have one question.

Mr RYAN: Sorry, member, I thought we were out of time.

Mr BERKMAN: That is all right. Thanks, Chair.

CHAIR: We are!

Mr BERKMAN: My question is about the \$10 million to which the minister referred for new RFS facilities which are obviously much needed and very welcome to deal with the growing impacts of climate change. Commissioner, I am interested in what research, consultation or other analysis has been done or will be conducted to ensure these facilities are located at the most at-risk communities? Will that analysis be made publicly available?

Commissioner Leach: Thank you for the question. There are a couple of considerations when we look at replacing a facility for a rural fire brigade. One is the risk environment that the brigade operates in, but it is also about where the volunteers are based in those locations. The location of any rural fire station is a combination of those things: its proximity to our volunteer base; where we can get available land; and taking into account the risk environment that we have. All those things are factored in. Largely, they are driven by the local decision-making of the local rural fire brigade.

Mr BERKMAN: Is that sort of analysis made available when those funding decisions are made? I say this without intending to cast any aspersions but, with the use of spreadsheets with coloured boxes that we have seen in recent years, transparency around these funding allocations is a very important concern.

Commissioner Leach: The RFS and the Fire and Rescue Service are quite different, because RFS involve community-led initiatives a lot of the time. The local rural fire brigade will apply for grant funding or raise money through various ways and will decide to build a facility. As we move more into that space—and we talked earlier about some of the funding announcements for us to lift the standard of some of our existing stations and to look at starting to provide some rural fire stations—we will use our service delivery planning tools which we have that are quite advanced—and we use them for a lot of our fire rescue and other planning purposes—to do that sort of analysis, because we want to get good value for what we do. We want the resources to be in a good location strategically for our brigades to be able to respond to the risk. We want them to be able to service the communities for the next 20 or 30 years.

CHAIR: I hand over to the member for Cooper.

Ms BUSH: My question is to the minister. Minister, I refer to page 1 of the SDS and the QFES objective to have communities that are connected and capable in the face of fires, emergencies and disasters. Can you please update the committee on how this government is supporting our dedicated State Emergency Service volunteers?

Mr RYAN: Thank you very much, member. We are obviously very grateful for the work that the thousands of State Emergency Service volunteers do in times of natural disaster and also year-round, whether it is assisting with the COVID-19 response, big events, search and rescue or helping to find missing people. Their work and their contribution is outstanding. We are grateful for it. One way that the community through the government is showing its appreciation to the State Emergency Service this year is through the State Emergency Service budget. The baseline funding is a record anyway—

\$23.79 million—but we have the \$20 million boost which brings it up to \$43.79 million for this year. That is double last year's budget and it is about 140 per cent more than when the previous government was in government.

Of course, this includes many important things. The commissioner highlighted some of these earlier: \$1.4 million for equipment for the rollout of additional personal protective clothing, safety equipment and operational equipment; and capital grants to assist with the acquisition and maintenance of facilities, vehicles and boats. It will also fund—and this is the issue on which the commissioner and I have received the most positive feedback—an uplift in the personnel, the paid staff who support the volunteers.

At the SES conference I was able, with the commissioner's great excitement, to announce that we would put on an extra seven staff but that with this extra boost we can put on an extra 33—a total of 40 extra staff which will make a huge difference. Just to show what that impact is, recently I was in Rockhampton visiting its SES groups. There was a lot of good feedback. Grown men were crying over this, because the SES means so much to them. This uplift means so much to them as well. They actually told me that in their region, the central region, this staffing uplift will allow them to open up the Gladstone SES area office after there were funding cuts in 2014 from the Newman government.

It is important obviously because it is a huge region and it will provide that support closer to volunteers. At the moment, volunteers in the Gladstone area have to travel to Rockhampton for their support. Having that Gladstone area office will mean that they will not have to travel to Rockhampton for that extra training but will be able to do it closer to home. This truly is a game changer.

Finally, I highlight—and it is something that the commissioner and I both spoke about and thought was really important—that the Lowood SES group facilities are receiving an upgrade. That is the group that Merryl Dray belonged to. They have been working on some big plans for an upgrade for a number of years now. This funding boost will support that upgrade. It is a good way to remember and honour Merryl.

CHAIR: I will go to the member for Caloundra.

Mr HUNT: Commissioner, with reference to the Budget Paper No. 3, the Caloundra electorate, as you know, is experiencing significant housing development and expects continued significant growth over about the next five years. Can you advise what QFES has planned to futureproof service delivery in this expanding Sunshine Coast community?

Commissioner Leach: Yes, thank you for the question. We do have plans. Caloundra is part of a very busy growth corridor for Queensland. We are looking to supplement our Fire and Rescue Service, State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service in that area. Currently, we have 17 Fire and Rescue stations located in the Sunshine Coast zone. We have a combined staffing of 33 station officers, 106 firefighters and 18.8 auxiliary firefighters.

During the 2021-22 year, fire and rescue stations within the Sunshine Coast zone responded to 8,589 incidents. As you can see, it is a very busy area for us. Out of those incidents, Fire and Rescue arrived first at 5,264. So far this financial year, up to 31 July, those same stations have responded to 509 incidents and been first in attendance at 338.

North Coast region, which incorporates the Sunshine Coast fire and rescue zone, was allocated eight additional firefighter recruits in 2021-22, with additional recruits to be allocated to the region over the next couple of years. In addition to that, North Coast region operates a fire communications centre based in Kawana, and that provides efficient and effective response to requests for emergency assistance from the community. That centre is staffed by a communications manager, four communications supervisors and 14 communications officers.

The Sunshine Coast area is also serviced by Sunshine Coast and Noosa SES units, and they are supported by the Sunshine Coast regional and Noosa shire councils. The Sunshine Coast SES unit has eight groups, with approximately 243 active members, and the Noosa SES unit has four groups, with about 65 active members. In the last financial year the combined volunteer hours for both units was more than 9,000 hours in operational tasking and almost 19,000 hours in training, administration, group exercises, courses, public education, recruitment, fundraising and equipment maintenance.

The Caloundra Rural Fire Service group, which services the Sunshine Coast area, has 35 rural fire brigades and just under 2,000 volunteers. Across the Caloundra Rural Fire Service area, a total of 215 permitted burns were completed during the 2021-22 financial year, and already in the 2021-22 year Caloundra area Rural Fire Service volunteers dedicated an estimated 7,133 hours in volunteering and incident attendance and 5,796 hours was dedicated to attendance at hazard reduction burns.

In response to the high growth being experienced in that North Coast corridor, QFES will construct a new fire and rescue station in the Aura Stockland development to service Caloundra South and surrounds. We are currently in negotiations with Stockland to finalise the securing of a suitable site for the new fire and rescue station. That will be part of the development's emergency services and community health precinct. I think Commissioner Carroll may have referenced that earlier. We expect the transfer of the land parcel from Stockland to occur mid-2023. That will follow registration of the land title and the construction of the road network and the establishment of other infrastructure to the site such as water supply and wastewater. In the meantime, we have preliminary station design activities occurring. It is anticipated that construction of the new Caloundra South fire and rescue station will start late 2023 or early 2024 and will take about 12 months. I say that a bit reservedly given the supply chain issues that we are experiencing at the moment, but obviously we are looking to get that completed as soon as possible. That new Caloundra South fire and rescue station will provide the area with state-of-the-art facilities for emergency frontline response.

Mr HUNT: Thank you very much. I am looking forward to it, along with the rest of Caloundra. Minister, I refer to page 1 of the SDS and the reference to enhancing community safety by minimising the impact of fire. Can you update the committee on the Rural Fire Service and what this government is doing to bolster support for this essential frontline service and increase the skills and experience of our Rural Fire Service volunteers?

Mr RYAN: Thank you, member, and thank you very much for the question. It is Rural Fire Service Week, so I am glad we had a very considered question about a very valuable member organisation of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. The commissioner and I were able to attend the launch of Rural Fire Service Week on Sunday at the Dayboro rural fire brigade. It was a great gathering. They are a great brigade. It was wonderful to be able to acknowledge their contribution as representatives of the tens of thousands of Rural Fire Service volunteers right across the state.

We have rural fire brigade volunteer members in every corner of Queensland. Their contribution to their communities and their state is important. They do not just serve their community; they do serve their state. At times of natural disaster, brigades and volunteers travel all around the state to support their fellow Queenslanders and even travel all around the nation to support their fellow Australians. That is why I am very pleased that the community, through the government, has been able to show its appreciation to the Rural Fire Service through this year's budget—a significant budget which includes a \$10 million budget boost. It takes the total, with the boost, to \$72.4 million this year, which is a 23 per cent increase on last year and almost double the last budget of the last government, so a significant increase. Just to put that in context, the last budget of the last government was \$37 million; this budget is \$72 million. That will, of course, go towards supporting Rural Fire Service volunteers and brigades right across the state.

You have heard from the commissioner about some of the global supply chain issues that everyone is facing. If you go to your local car dealer they will tell you that there are delays at the moment. Notwithstanding all of that, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services have a very solid plan in place around procuring the appliances that our Rural Fire Service needs. Of the orders we put in last financial year, 38 have already arrived and 28 are scheduled for delivery. So 66 we ordered last financial year. We have now also put in place the multiyear procurement approach, which means we put those orders in place for a longer period so that we can overcome the ups and downs of the global supply chain challenges. Over the next two years we are putting in orders for 120 additional rural fire appliances, over and above what we already have. That is a significant investment.

The commissioner also mentioned for the first time ever—and this is really important—the Rural Fire Service Facility Program. It is now a dedicated line item in the budget: \$1 million recurring to support new facilities and facility upgrades in addition to, of course, the \$10 million budget boost. That \$10 million budget boost will go towards not only supporting new facilities and facility upgrades but also installing deluge systems on approximately 200 medium attack appliances. A deluge system is a sprinkler system that we can put on top of the cabin of a Rural Fire Service appliance to support their safety needs should they be stuck in a bushfire event. It is a critical safety upgrade and, of course, we are very proud to support it. We back the Rural Fire Service and this budget shows that.

Ms BUSH: I direct my question to the Inspector-General Emergency Management. Good afternoon, Inspector-General. In reference to page 11 of the SDS, I was hoping you might inform the committee of the work that you and your office are doing in partnering with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in relation to biosecurity hazards in Queensland.

Mr Dawson: Thank you very much indeed. I would like to thank the honourable member for the question. My name is Alastair Dawson. I am the Inspector-General Emergency Management here in Queensland. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting today.

The question is a very good question. The IGEM has established a strong partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Under the State Disaster Management Plan, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is the lead agency for containment and eradication of emergency animal and plant diseases and pests. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries also provides advice on agriculture, fisheries and forestry in disaster events. The strong partnership that IGEM has with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has led IGEM to be invited to attend their quarterly intelligence updates as an observer, to sit on the crisis communication network as part of the whole-of-government biosecurity emergency response and readiness, and to sit as an observer on the Emergency Animal Disease Preparedness Taskforce. In the 2021-22 financial year IGEM worked in partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries as part of a locust plague review, which was delivered in June 2022.

This provided both the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Inspector-General Emergency Management with insights into the interface between the two mature systems of biosecurity and disaster management to support DAF in meeting their biosecurity responsibilities. This was done in partnership with other agencies that also participated, such as the Maranoa City Council, and also the emergency management coordinators and the Queensland Police Service. I thank you very much for the question.

CHAIR: We are now reaching the end of the time allocated for the examination of the proposed expenditure for areas of responsibility administered by the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services. I do not think there are any questions outstanding.

Mr RYAN: No, we have answered them all.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Is there anything you would like to add before we close the hearing?

Mr RYAN: My closing remarks are only two minutes, Chair, so if you wanted to ask one more question, I promise you we will finish on time.

Mr HUNT: Minister, I refer to page 1 of the SDS and the government's commitment to delivering even better fire services right across Queensland. Could you please update the committee on the government's commitment to significantly increase firefighter numbers ensuring the fire and rescue service has the resources it needs to protect our community?

Mr RYAN: Absolutely, member. Thank you very much for your interest in this. As a representative of a community which is due to have a new fire station delivered over the next few years, there is interest in that, obviously.

Mr HUNT: I am very interested.

Mr RYAN: The government's commitment to the fire and rescue service is obviously made manifest through our election commitment to deliver 357 extra firefighters. We are well on track with that commitment. Already we have recruited 145 of the 357, and this financial year we are expecting to onboard another 90 roughly. That is, of course, a significant uplift. It will not just be, as the commissioner explained, firefighters for new fire stations in growth areas; it will actually be, in many areas, about providing uplift for the roster so that there is more depth to the roster line to ensure that if someone does need to go on training or if someone does come down sick, there is capacity there to use a broader roster line to support the needs and requirements of a particular community.

As many people know, the teams that support firefighting in communities are relatively small. In a permanent full-time station, you generally have four firefighters who respond to calls for service on any one roster shift so that if one person gets sick, you need to obviously support the capability at that station by bringing a firefighter in from somewhere else. Our 357 firefighters will support the depth that we have in delivering those services in key areas. We are obviously very pleased to be supporting that.

CHAIR: I understand the deputy chair wishes to say something.

Mrs GERBER: Thank you, Chair, for the indulgence. I wanted to put on record my thanks to Mr Alistair Dawson. He recently came down to my community at Elanora to hold a flood forum. It was very well-received by the community and I am very grateful for the time you gave our community in relation to the flood review and inquiry you are currently conducting. Thank you very much.

Mr Dawson: Thank you very much indeed, honourable member.

Mr RYAN: He is a very charming man.

CHAIR: I hand over to the minister, please, for his closing remarks.

Mr RYAN: Thank you very much, Chair. I thank you for your great chairing of this estimates hearing. In fact, I think it is a world record—no points of orders really and no rulings. Well done, Chair. You are obviously a very diligent leader of this committee. I thank the shadow minister, the member for Maiwar, and also committee members who have attended.

I also take this opportunity to particularly thank those who were important contributors to this session: Commissioner, to you and your team, and to the charming Inspector-General of Emergency Management, Alistair Dawson, and your team. I thank the deputy commissioners, the assistant commissioners and the chief of staff to the commissioner. I also particularly highlight the contributions of Cathy Knapp, Lisa Walsh, Inspector Rohan Whilchefski nicknamed The Chef, Jamie Scales, Krissy Sheppard, Lauren Poynting and Jane Houston. I thank Jessica Rea, Neil White, Eden Hughs-Barbour and Amanda Clarke. Finally, as I say every year, I thank the committee for all the questions—the good, the bad and the ugly—and I am sure everyone will agree the answers were excellent.

CHAIR: Thank you, members of the committee, the secretariat and visiting members who participated in the hearing today. On behalf of the committee, I also thank the Hansard staff, the parliamentary broadcast staff, the orderlies and all the other parliamentary staff who assisted today. I declare the hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 5.15 pm.