



PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Mr RI Katter MP
Mr GR Kelly MP
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Mr TJ Smith MP

Staff present:

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PUBLIC BRIEFING—INQUIRY INTO SUGARCANE BIOENERGY OPPORTUNITIES IN QUEENSLAND

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 19 November 2025

Brisbane

WEDNESDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2025

The committee met at 12.19 pm.

CHAIR: Good afternoon. I declare open the public briefing for the committee's inquiry into sugarcane bioenergy opportunities in Queensland. My name is Steve Bennett. I am the member for Burnett and chair of the committee. With me here today are: Mr James Martin, the member for Stretton and deputy chair; Mr Nigel Dalton, the member for Mackay; Mr Glen Kelly, the member for Mirani; Mr Tom Smith, the member for Bundaberg; and Mr Robbie Katter, the member for Traeger.

This briefing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the briefing at the discretion of the committee. I remind committee members that the officers are here to provide factual and technical information. Any questions seeking an opinion about policy should be directed to the minister of left to the floor of the House.

These proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. Please turn your mobile phones to silent or off.

BACON, Mr Ashley, Deputy Director-General, Agriculture, Department of Primary Industries

BOLTON, Mr Graeme, Director-General, Department of Primary Industries

FERRIS, Mr Shaun, Deputy Director-General, State Development, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

LEGATTE, Mr Shaun, Executive Director Strategy, National, Analytics, Transmission and Programs, Supply and Storage, Queensland Treasury

PATERSON, Ms Joanne, Director, Biofuels, Emerging Industries, State Development Group, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

STONE, Mr Mark, Executive Director, Gas and Sustainable Fuels, Queensland Treasury

WALSH, Mr Paul, Director, Future Fuels, Queensland Treasury

CHAIR: Welcome. I invite you to brief the committee, after which we will ask some questions.

Mr Bolton: Thank you, Chair. My name is Graeme Bolton. I am the Director-General of the Department of Primary Industries. I will provide a brief opening statement on behalf of the three agencies here today and then we will gladly take further questions. We have representatives from the three key government departments responsible for assisting the government in developing opportunities for a renewable energy industry based on agricultural feedstocks here with you today.

State Development is the lead agency for biofuels within the Queensland government. Its role is primarily developing the supply side of the biofuels industry. This touches on all aspects of the supply or value chain, from feedstock production through to the end purchaser, and leads delivery of the government's commitment to look at ways biofuels can expand while working closely with the agricultural sector.

Queensland Treasury is responsible for energy policy in Queensland including electricity, gas and biofuels, along with policy and regulation. It has responsibility for planning and securing Queensland's energy mix and prioritising the delivery of an energy system that is affordable, reliable and sustainable.

The Department of Primary Industries, DPI, has responsibility for agricultural industry development including diversification and opportunities to value-add to agricultural products and is the lead agency to co-design and co-deliver the delivery of our ambitious goal of growing GVP to \$30 billion by 2030.

The 2025 sugarcane crushing season has a few more weeks to run in some regions. I advised the committee in April this year that for the 2024-25 year the industry produced 27.305 million tonnes of cane from approximately 333,000 hectares of land. This delivered over \$2.4 billion in economic value. Indications are that this year's production levels will be similar. However, revenues are still yet to be finalised.

The committee will also be aware that the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is progressing the development of a National Bioenergy Feedstock Strategy and has recently undertaken public consultation. DPI collaborated with State Development and Treasury to prepare the Queensland government's feedback to this discussion paper.

This initial effort reflects the commitment and active collaboration of the Queensland government agencies to contribute to critical national policy settings that will provide certainty and investment attraction to further develop Queensland's bioenergy industry. The Biofuels Feedstock Expansion Study, commissioned by State Development in January 2025, will be a key Queensland input to the development of the national strategy. It is expected that the study will be completed in early 2026.

The Australian government announced on 17 September 2025 their \$1.1 billion Cleaner Fuels Program aimed at stimulating private investment in Australian onshore production of biofuels including renewable diesel and sustainable aviation fuel. Departmental officers are engaging regularly with their Commonwealth and Australian jurisdictional counterparts to ensure Queensland interests are represented in the national policy and funding framework conversations.

In late July the Queensland government, through the department of state development, launched the Sovereign Industry Development Fund, with \$180.6 million available to build on our state's sovereign industry capability to draw on our strengths and grow our regions. Biofuels is one of three targeted sectors—the others being defence and biomedical—with the fund aiming to catalyse the development of new manufacturing or service capability within Queensland.

Driving innovation and technological advancement is important to deliver affordable, reliable and sustainable energy solutions. Supporting commercialisation of new technologies and fostering private sector investment allows the private sector to bring the capital, efficiencies and speed needed for commercially viable and scalable solutions.

A new Queensland Investment Corporation Investor Gateway has been established to attract private sector capital by aligning investor interest with system needs, supported by the \$400 million Queensland Energy Investment Fund, which will drive investment in new energy generation and firming projects. Biofuels, which is a targeted sector in the Sovereign Industry Development Fund, enhances fuel security, promotes economic growth and creates high-value regional jobs.

Following extensive industry and public consultation *Primary Industries Prosper 2050* was released on 11 August this year. It sets the 25-year vision for the primary industries sector. Work is currently underway to develop regionally-based five-year action plans, which have been an important mechanism for promoting next-generation innovation in primary industries and supply chain delivery.

Consultation to date has clearly identified opportunities to establish, support and grow a biofuels supply chain in Queensland. Across government, and in consultation with industry stakeholders, we are currently working through the ideas raised and what these could look like in the context of the Prosper 2050 delivery plan and investment moving forward.

Our three agencies are strongly encouraged by the broad responsible stakeholders during the public consultation period on the committee's work. This included strong interest in biofuels, energy investment and development. It is particularly encouraging to see that interest extended all the way along the value chain from sugarcane growers and mills to project developers, economic development organisations and fuel users. The committee will be aware that the submissions received represented agriculture, transport, energy, local government, manufacturing and allied industries, and investigations.

I trust that the response prepared by the Queensland government agencies will assist the committee in further understanding the issues identified through the submissions. The three collaborating agencies will continue to support the government's commitment to actively look at ways to expand biofuels production and its contribution to the state's economy.

Market demand for biofuels is growing, and there is tremendous opportunity for Queensland to capitalise on its several comparative advantages to develop a commercially sustainable biofuels industry and create a degree of fuel security. The development of biofuels projects presents opportunities for the sugarcane industry and regional communities to benefit by contributing to the production supply chain.

I trust that the engagement of industry and community stakeholders and the contributions made during consultation will assist the committee in its deliberations. I would like to thank you for your ongoing interest in the Queensland sugarcane and bioenergy industries. We would welcome any questions the committee may have.

CHAIR: Thank you, Director-General. I will hand over to the deputy chair.

Mr MARTIN: I think this is a question for Treasury. In your response I have not seen anything about energy prices. One of the things the committee is looking at is increasing electricity generation through cogen using sugar. Has the department done any modelling on what that might do to energy prices for the consumer? Will prices increase or is there potential that electricity prices could decrease? If you have done modelling, I think that would be really good to see.

Mr Legatte: No. We have not done any specific modelling on biofuels and sugar cane in terms of pricing. The pricing for this is really quite complex. Obviously, there are a lot of inputs and there are a lot of outputs. It is moving. We have heard from a number of people today about the shifts and change in all of those inputs and outputs. It is something we would have to look at on a case-by-case basis. No, we have not done any modelling on that.

Mr DALTON: Several stakeholders have expressed support for expanding capacity in the cogeneration area. Can you advise the committee in relation to the financial and technical viability of the enhanced cogeneration capacity?

Mr Legatte: Increasing cogeneration from sugar cane is largely an economic and a technical issue within an established competitive market and regulatory framework. It is technically possible to expand cogeneration in Queensland's sugar mills; however, it must be approached with a clear understanding of the technical and market considerations. Opportunities should only be pursued where it makes commercial sense. Not all mills are equally suited to cogeneration expansion. Factors impacting the commerciality will vary between mills, for example—standard business things—the scale of the operation, the infrastructure, the fuel availability and the grid access. Cogeneration operates in a competitive market and will face competition from other generation sources as well.

Mr SMITH: Which of the milling companies were engaged for consultation in the formation of the Energy Roadmap?

Mr Legatte: I cannot tell you off the top of my head. I know the Treasurer had a number of roundtable discussions with a number of stakeholders. That is probably something where I would have to take the chair's advice on coming back to you on the companies.

Mr SMITH: I am happy for you to take that on notice.

CHAIR: Are you happy to take it on notice?

Mr Legatte: Yes.

CHAIR: We will make a note of that.

Mr G KELLY: Graeme, what work have your departments done in the past around trying to create environments that will help this industry grow to ensure sustainability of mills?

Mr Bolton: The department has done quite a bit of work in terms of working with growers in various regions. Probably the most recent example is developing Prosper 2050, which is starting to look at those long-term opportunities and constraints facing the sector as a whole but in particular opportunities for sugar cane growers. Particularly, we know that some regions are not likely to be compatible for growing sugar as a commodity in the future. Mossman in particular is an example of where the supply of cane to the mill just was not enough to keep the mill viable. We have been working directly with that particular grower cohort around transitioning them into alternative opportunities. We are also working with growers in other regions where we think this might be a future issue, so we are having those conversations early, working with the growers and the millers, and exploring opportunities such as potential biofuels or other commodities.

Mr KATTER: My question would probably best be directed to Mark or Shaun from Treasury. Let's start by saying we are about 20 years into talking about how we are going to ignite this industry and how it will develop. The common denominator at just about every point has been a failure of government to enforce some sort of regulatory impost, like an E10 mandate or an offtake agreement

for the energy or the power, and for the power purchase agreement to be a trigger or a catalyst to any one of these developments. Here we are talking about more developments and helping them on the front end through a fund. That is great, but what signal are you going to tell us that there will be some appetite for the government this time to lay the foundation for a market? You need a market to sell into this or you are never going to get a project up. Over 20 years has shown that a fully market-led solution is not working. What can you tell us that we have done differently this time?

Mr Stone: I might need to make a couple of comments and test if I am answering the question. I think part of it may talk to future government policy, which obviously I will not be able to talk to, but I can give some context.

Mr KATTER: I would appreciate that.

Mr Stone: With your indulgence, I might say a few things quite quickly around the market dynamics for petrol and ethanol, a few fact-based things about how the mandate is operating today and a few things around how the exemption process is managed—just a few stats, if that is okay.

Mr KATTER: That is a good start.

Mr Stone: Petrol sales have trended downwards in the past 10 years; it is a declining market in Australia. As we have heard from previous submissions and in the Queensland government's submission, ethanol blended fuels—although about 56 million litres per year in the market, about 15 per cent of Australia's ethanol production—are declining, of course, because of increased fuel efficiency, increased penetration of EV and hybrid, and reduced kilometres driven by passenger vehicles, mainly since COVID. That is that market segment.

The mandate, as you well know, has been in place since 2017. It is a mandate on liable fuel retailers. That is the first cut of all of the population of fuel retailers. Fuel retailers that have 10 or more sites or sell more than 500,000 litres per quarter would be liable, and that is to sell four per cent bio-based petrol. In practical terms, that means that four in 10 motorists need to be choosing E10 at the pump. Today it is 2.9—sometimes very close to three in 10 but it is not four in 10. The mandate places obligations on wholesalers and retailers and does not place obligations on consumers. Neither does it prohibit the sale of other choices at the bowser. We have heard anecdotally this morning that, whereas I preference E10 for my hybrid vehicle, my neighbour chooses premium because he drives a taxi and he has convinced himself that that is the right fuel for his circumstance.

The mandate has had an effect. The policy has some efficacy. Ethanol sales before the mandate commenced in 2017 were about 1.5 per cent. As I said, they are now at about 2.9 per cent. Prior to the mandate commencing, in 2016 retail sites selling E10 were about 343; as of last month it is 900. That is an increase of 160 per cent. I think the question becomes not whether it has had some efficacy but, perhaps subjectively, whether it has been as effective as it can be and what could be done to make it more effective. I think that falls into two camps. One is administering the legislation that we have today—and that is the task of me and my team. We actively administer the exemption process, the biofuel mandate. It is the main stage of a number of our colleagues. Whether that should have enhanced regulatory tools—there is no such thing as a perfect regulatory framework—is a matter for government policy.

Mr KATTER: Can I cut in for a second? It may help you to answer the question. Peter Blanshard with IAME had a program that was to entice people to use it, and that got cut a few years ago, admittedly by another government. You might weave that into the answer, because you are saying that usage went down or the take-up has not been good, but there is a tangible reason for that.

Mr Stone: Thank you. I will defer to my colleague Paul Walsh.

Mr Walsh: Peter was referring to what is called the E10 checker. That was also part of the E10 OK campaign. They had limited-life funding under the previous government. That funding ended around COVID and the programs ended then. The checker was one element of that. Someone could put in their rego, it would then pull from a database to say what sort of car that was, and then they would go to an IAME database that had drawn from people's manuals for their cars saying whether they can use E10 and would deliver a response. That was the program that was ended around 2020. As Peter was saying in his evidence, people can still find out that information themselves without the checker. There are lots of cars that, when you open up the flap, will say 'E10 compatible'. Their manuals will say whether it is compatible as well. The information is available; the E10 OK checker was just designed to make that simpler.

CHAIR: Are you happy with that, Rob?

Mr KATTER: Yes.

CHAIR: I have a question for, I think, Treasury, about the current conversations or proposed conversations with the Department of Defence about what the sugarcane industry's liquid fuel requirements may be. I assume that is all happening anyway, but it would be nice to get an update on that for the committee, please.

Mr Stone: My colleague sits on the national fuel security committee, so I might defer to him.

Mr Walsh: You would have seen Defence's net zero strategies in relation to fuel. They see low-carbon liquid fuels, as they call them—mainly renewable diesel and SAF—as the future opportunity, boosting security partially. There are lots of things you need to do to boost security; this is part of it. You would have seen also their strategies in relation to interoperability as they move around the world, with global operations. They want to be confident that their fleet can use it as well. They are definitely moving in this space.

There is a national fuel council that I am on, which I cannot say too much about due to confidentiality things that I have signed, but it is definitely something they are looking at. They will report to the federal government about opportunities in that space. You may have seen recent media releases from Defence about using renewable diesel in Townsville in a ship and using SAF in aircraft. They are definitely taking up these fuels and are quite keen in this space.

CHAIR: Is that strategic geographical advantage we have with our sugar mills and our ports all being strategically located high on the agenda when they talk about accessibility and availability?

Mr Walsh: I do not want to speak too much for Defence, but it is that sovereign capability that they are interested in. They have just released a tender where they are looking for someone to assist them to locate where these fuels will be produced in Australia, to help them figure out where they are going to get their sources from for sustainable fuels.

Mr MARTIN: I return to my earlier question about energy prices. One of the things the committee has struggled with is that this is quite a complicated area. You said before that Treasury has not done any modelling. If the committee were to ask Treasury to do modelling, is that something Treasury can do or is that something that Energy Queensland should do? Who is the right person to ask and what is involved in that? Is this a mammoth task that requires months and months or is this something that can be done within a short timeframe?

Mr Legatte: I do not think it is something that could be done quite quickly. There are a number of participants in the market, and the nature of the energy sector is that it is really quite complex. This is not definitive but, to give an example, if there are smaller operations and they can consume power in a more localised area it is actually a lot easier, but if you start to get into a bigger operation and you need to comply with the requirements of the National Electricity Market—for example, it has five-minute settlement of dispatch—it starts to become far more complex. If we are looking at the inputs on the supply side and the scale of each of these operations and aggregating them all together and then identifying—there was a comment in one of the earlier sessions about different tariff structures and things like that. There are a whole range of parameters that would need to be considered and a lot of assumptions would need to be made. It would be quite a large ordeal to produce something that would be meaningful to be relied upon. It is really quite complex.

Mr Bolton: In addition to what my colleague has mentioned around the modelling challenges, it also is very different depending on where you go and what mill you are talking about. A lot of these decisions are commercial decisions at the end of the day, based on the age of their infrastructure and when they need to be renewing that or upgrading that. Some mills are already making that decision. Tully mill, in particular, is looking to invest on this next opportunity around cogeneration, but others will probably not be in that space for some time. As Shaun mentioned, there might be other factors, like connection to infrastructure—the national grid—which might also impact on some of those commercial decisions.

Mr DALTON: Previous witnesses talked about the rail network around mills—the infrastructure that needs to be maintained and in some cases, when a natural disaster happens, needs to be fixed up. Is there an area where that is actually being looked at in detail to see how much that costs, because all of the renewable biofuels really rely on the cane getting to the mill at some point in a six- to seven-month period?

Mr Bolton: The cane rail infrastructure is a really critical component of each sugar mill, irrespective of whether it is for crushing sugar cane for sugar or looking at other biofuel opportunities. The rail infrastructure is the property of each mill. It is their responsibility to make sure it is maintained and also potentially how they then look at repairing that post event. We certainly help them and provide them with support where we can, but in terms of the financial responsibility and the planning it largely falls on each individual mill operator to maintain and manage their own network.

Mr SMITH: One of the previous witnesses in the hearing mentioned the disappointment of bioenergy and biofuels being included only towards the end of the Energy Roadmap under the Sovereign Industry Development Fund. Which agriculture and horticulture peak body groups were consulted to inform the Energy Roadmap? If you need to take that on notice, that would be okay.

Mr Legatte: This may partially answer your question because it is similar to your last question and I have had feedback in-between questions. The Treasurer had a number of meetings, represented by peak bodies at the round tables. He actually had the Queensland Farmers' Federation CEO, Jo Sheppard, representing interests. She was present at 8 May and 25 September meetings.

Mr SMITH: You said that you had something that would answer the previous question as well with regard to the milling companies? Was QFF the only peak body group?

Mr Legatte: Yes.

Mr SMITH: Of all of the other peak body groups, there was just one? Okay, thank you.

Mr G KELLY: Has the department done any exploration, as well as discussion with stakeholders, around funds to help support biofuels and biogas options?

Mr Bolton: I might provide a general introduction and then hand across to Mr Shaun Ferris, who can talk more about the sovereign investment fund. We are working very closely with a number of proponents around biofuel opportunities within the cane industry, and for commercial-in-confidence reasons we cannot discuss specifics. They are looking at a range of things, working from the mill around cogeneration through to looking at taking trash and other waste that is left behind in the paddock and turning that into some form of biofuels. In terms of the funding opportunities, I will hand across to Shaun.

Mr Ferris: That is correct. In relation to grant funding opportunities to support this industry, the government has established the Sovereign Industry Development Fund. It is a \$180.6 million grant funding program that is looking to support three key priority industries across the state: biomed, biofuels and defence. Of course, biofuels is the topic of some conversation today. That program opened in June of this year. The fund is very much looking to fund projects that are close to shovel-ready, strategic and catalytic in their nature that will help us build sovereign capability and capacity across those three industries in particular, as well as biofuels.

Our department has had some fairly significant interest from the private sector around interfacing and leveraging the funding opportunities through the Sovereign Industry Development Fund. In particular, with the biofuels industry there is very strong industry interest. We continue to engage with those parties that have made initial inquiries. A number of companies are progressing through our process to consider their applications. We look forward to making some future announcements around decisions on application funding from that fund into this industry.

Mr KATTER: I will pick up where we were before. The question is: what is the signal or what will be done differently this time? I believe that to make an investment or to push this forward industry needs a signal from the government that there is going to be an offtake market for them. You explained before, Mark, how it is failing—or not—to reach those points so what is going to be done differently here? We are talking about industry providing something to investors to show that there will be a market and that government will move in and regulate or force a mandate, issue noncompliance fines and that sort of thing.

Mr Stone: Unless there is something that you specifically wanted me to go back on in terms of the ethanol mandate, I might move away from that.

Mr KATTER: Yes, that is alright.

Mr Stone: I am happy to come back to that.

Mr KATTER: It is pretty broad.

Mr Stone: Certainly our group is focused on a lot of advocacy of policy settings, either announcements or the policy development at the national level. We heard from LMS earlier around some movement to support investment, but it is kind of in its early stages. We heard about the extension of national gas laws to include covered gases. We heard about changes in the GO Scheme to allow renewable gas certification, although that is a Green Pilot program. We heard in July about the changes to the NGER settings to allow some market-based reporting of emissions and renewable gas certification. While there is some market-based mechanisms for that particular biofuel emerging, it is clear that investors are looking for regulatory certainty and there has not been the period, I would suggest, for that to get baked in. A lot of our work within Treasury is advocating for Queensland's interests in national policy settings. I will pass to my colleague Mr Walsh.

Mr Walsh: It is in the federal space. It is obviously very advantageous if there are national policies and those sorts of things, given that fuels are a national and an international market. The federal government released a consultation paper last year saying what they were actively considering, plus there have been a few other announcements. The important ones are the \$1.1 billion Cleaner Fuels fund, which will be over 10 years. They are designing the rules for that now. That is sort of a production incentive. There is the \$250 million Future Made in Australia fund, which is allocated to what they refer to as low-carbon liquid fuels, mainly as a capital investment fund. That is the production side.

On the demand side, which I think you are basically interested in, they are consulting on a national mandate, whether that is a low-carbon fuel standard like they have in California or a SAF mandate or both. That is what they are actively considering at the moment. The beauty of that will be that it is a national framework that applies nationally and does not get stopped at one particular border, such as at Queensland's borders.

Mr KATTER: No-one asked about unleaded fuel, did they?

Mr Walsh: No.

CHAIR: Your submission talks about the \$1.1 billion federal government money that was put out in early September. AgForce raised some concerns in their submission, more about low-cost ethanol imports. Low-hanging fruit, I guess, they were alluding to. What could the departments do to empower sugar-based fuel initiatives and make sure we can access some of the federal funding that has been put out there?

Mr Walsh: It is a bit of a challenge. They have not designed the rules for these things yet, but I think it is important that Queensland, the other states and industry are ready for when these rules come out and have the feedstock available and have industry in a position to say they have projects that are partially ready to go. Jet Zero is in the FEED study, which is quite advanced. Ampol is not looking at sugar cane but is still quite advanced. Our limits at the moment are actual ethanol production. Wilmar is our only current ethanol producer. Their production is about 60 million litres, of which about two-thirds is for fuel. I think that is why we heard Jet Zero saying they were going to take ethanol from somewhere else.

Regardless of whether it is imports from another state or imports from overseas, it helps build that supply chain. If investors can see that plants can stand up because they have a supply of ethanol and their customers are taking the product—either renewable diesel or SAF—then they can start having the confidence to maybe build the mills and say, 'I know there is a market out there.' With imports, it is important to recognise and encourage them initially—because we have no production at all of renewable diesel or SAF at the moment—just to build that confidence in the supply chain.

CHAIR: We are saying we need them to be shovel-ready, in essence, for the federal government?

Mr Walsh: They will for some of their funding, but it is over 10 years. It is building that confidence and getting some supply there. Then, when there is a pie being created, you want a piece of the pie.

Mr MARTIN: SAF is obviously in the future Energy Roadmap, and I want to ask a similar question: which SAF producers or future SAF producers were consulted?

Mr Legatte: I cannot speak for all of the attendees at the Treasurer's round tables and whom he met with. I have mentioned Jo Sheppard from the Queensland Farmers' Federation. I know that he also met with the Agriculture Energy Water Council, chaired by Tony Perrett. He has met with some other parties but I do not have his full diary in front of me.

Mr MARTIN: But were there any SAF producers specifically?

Mr Legatte: Not that I can answer, no.

Mr MARTIN: Can you come back to us with that?

CHAIR: I am struggling. The government is putting a policy position together. You can request the minister's diary if you want as opposed to this. I will not argue about it.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair. The point of order goes to this: in informing the Energy Roadmap, did the department meet with SAF producers or future SAF producers?

CHAIR: And they said that is a policy question.

Mr SMITH: It is not a policy; that is the department.

CHAIR: I made the point that if you want to ask that question of the minister then you can.

Mr SMITH: I am asking the department.

CHAIR: To that point, I have made a call. I do not think we will place that one on notice. I let the other one go.

Mr SMITH: We are asking it of the department, Chair.

Mr MARTIN: You have made the ruling. I disagree, but you have made the ruling. I will move on to the next question. In relation to the \$180 million sovereign investment fund, can you advise the committee how much of that fund is being spent in 2024-25? In terms of the applicants, do you have an idea of what amount is going to be spent on sugar bioenergy?

Mr Ferris: As I said earlier, the program opened for applications in June-July this year. We currently have a number of applications and inquiries in front of us that we are working through. None of the \$180.6 million has been allocated at this stage, because we are part way through the consideration of the applications, which are coming from three various industries. They are coming from the biomed, biofuel and defence industries. As I said earlier, we will be looking forward to making some future announcements once we land on who is successful, whose applications are consistent with the guidelines that we put out for the public to respond to as part of the application process and which of those projects are strategic and catalytic. There is a whole range of criteria in the guidelines that the applications must meet. We are working through the process at the moment of considering those. None of the dollars have been allocated at this stage, but I would say that there is considerable interest across those three industries for grant funding.

CHAIR: I will conclude this briefing. Thank you to everyone who participated, especially those who have sat here as long as we have. That is incredible and I thank you for your interest. Thank you to Hansard. One question was taken on notice and the answer is due by 26 November. The question was about the milling companies that were consulted. That concludes the deliberations. I declare this briefing closed.

The committee adjourned at 12.59 pm.