



PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr SA Bennett MP—Chair
Mr NJ Dalton MP
Mr RI Katter MP
Mr GR Kelly MP
Mr JR Martin MP
Mr TJ Smith MP

Staff present:

Dr A Ward—Committee Secretary
Dr K Kowol—Assistant Committee Secretary

PUBLIC BRIEFING—BRIEFING OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND MINES, MANUFACTURING, REGIONAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 19 February 2025

Brisbane

WEDNESDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2025

The committee met at 11.26 am.

FRAINE, Mr Graham, Director-General, Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing, and Regional and Rural Development

GRABSKI, Mr Andrew, Acting Deputy Director-General, Georesources, Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing, and Regional and Rural Development

KALSI, Mr Gobes, Executive Director, Reform Strategy and Delivery Lead, Reform Strategy and Delivery Office, Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing, and Regional and Rural Development

KIDD, Mr Jason, Deputy Director-General, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development, Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing, and Regional and Rural Development

ROSANOWSKI, Ms Amy, Deputy Director-General, Lands, Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing, and Regional and Rural Development

VENABLES, Ms Celia, Deputy Director-General, Business and Corporate Partnership, Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing, and Regional and Rural Development

CHAIR: Welcome, Director-General, and officers from the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing, and Regional and Rural Development, which has the longest title in the government. Congratulations for winning that title!

Mr Fraine: For anyone who is counting, it is 94 characters.

CHAIR: Director-General, I invite you to introduce your team and brief the committee, after which committee members will have some questions for you. Please remember to press your microphones on before you start speaking and identify yourselves as well. With that, it is over to you, Director-General.

Mr Fraine: I would like to start by thanking the committee for giving us this opportunity to provide a briefing today on what is a rich and varied portfolio with a lot of exciting opportunity for the state, and I will talk more to that shortly. Before I start, I will briefly introduce you to the other members of our executive team as a department. I will start from the far left. Andrew Grabski is the Acting Deputy Director-General for Georesources—so think of the mines part of the portfolio. Jason Kidd is the Deputy Director-General for Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development element of the department. Celia Venables runs our Business and Corporate Partnership—so think of the corporate function of the agency. Amy Rosanowski is the Deputy Director-General for Lands—that title speaks for itself. Gobes Kalsi is the Executive Director for our Reform Strategy and Delivery Lead area.

As I mentioned, the department that we form as an executive team came together last November following the machinery-of-government changes following the election. As you can tell from both the name and the breadth of those sitting in front of you now, we are a broad-based department that brings a number of areas of government together, and I will get into why I think there is power in that shortly. Importantly from my perspective we are a key economic development agency that is building a legacy of change in growth in two of Queensland's top 10 industries that I will speak to shortly that are the resources and the manufacturing sectors. Importantly, probably for the first time, these industries are coming together backed by the power of management of our lands portfolio and also how we look at this across the state from a coordinated regional presence and view of regional and rural development.

To give you a couple of pieces of introduction, I will give you a few numbers around our best asset as a department, and that is our people. We are a department of roughly 1,500 technical experts across streams ranging from valuations, geology, surveying, policy, industry development, engineering, land management, spatial services, corporate services and more. You can see within that 1,500 quite a diverse and powerful skill set. We are located in about 52 offices across the state. That is not only along the coastal strip—so along that coastal strip we are everywhere from Cairns to the Gold Coast—but we have a lot of offices west of the divide—anywhere from Georgetown, Mount Isa, Charleville, Longreach, Roma.

We have a presence across the breadth of what we do in many regional towns in this state. We also have 12 depots, six manufacturing hub locations and, as members of the committee will be aware, with at least one more manufacturing hub to come in the case of Toowoomba from a government election commitment. For me, this regional footprint makes it possible for us to really understand and work with the needs and aspirations of local communities both around jobs in local communities and around some of the broader social and environmental aspirations that they have as well. That is why for us how we bake the regional and rural development into the rest of the work we do is critical.

Speaking of the industries that I mentioned earlier, if we start with resources, I think committee members will be aware the resources industry has long been the cornerstone of the economy in this state, generating jobs and prosperity up and down, east to west. It is a sector that employs more than 79,000 people—60 per cent of whom live outside the south-east of the state. In terms of contribution to the economy, it was worth about \$61.5 billion last financial year and exports were worth over \$92 billion during that same period. That is really an 82 per cent share of all merchandise exported from this state.

Resources, if you like, is the No. 1 industry in this state. You match it with manufacturing, which is the No. 5 industry in this state, which contributes nearly \$27 billion to the economy of this state. It also is a major employer. It employs about 180,000 people including more than 48,000 of them outside of the south-east. It underpins many other elements of the supply chain and many other elements of local economies, whether it is the resources which we talk about or construction or defence or energy or housing or agriculture—many of those spaces.

As I mentioned earlier, we back that up with the lands portfolio. Committee members may be aware that this department is the manager of 62 per cent of the state's land—that is, when you combine what we can do with that with the power of the elements of the portfolio, it is a very exciting prospect in terms of what we do. That land includes community purpose reserves, leasehold land, road reserves, unallocated state land—a range of different categorisations that, committee members, we are happy to speak more about. Most of it is held as leasehold. We administer roughly 18,000 leases. That includes everything from very small pump sites or, in somewhere like Gympie, a very small mine shaft towards the centre of town to upwards of 100,000-hectare pastoral leases and 29 Great Barrier Reef island resorts. You can see that the lands portfolio is pretty broad in itself.

In terms of what does this all mean when you bring it together, I will give you a couple of examples. For me, the opportunity comes where we can bring all those levers to bear at once. To give you a small example, a couple of weeks ago we met across the agency with a small company called Graphinex. Graphinex are an Australian firm that are basically looking to mine graphite up near Croydon, up around the Esmeralda part of the world. They are looking to mine it, process it and then provide their processed materials to the local manufacturing industry for batteries. For them to do that as a business, they need mining and environmental approvals, they need land tenure approvals and they need enhanced connections into the manufacturing industry for their battery anode facility in Townsville. For the first time, you have an agency that can either directly—as in what we have in our control—or in other ways facilitate basically an end-to-end supply chain for this business. This speaks to what we have been trying to do for decades in this state, and that is build our onshore supply chains from mining materials, processing and manufacturing. That is one example that I share with the committee about the power of what this agency does.

The other is around how we can provide some of the benefits in our individual functions in this agency for those regional communities that we look at. Whether it is the work we are doing in supporting Transport and Main Roads around Country Roads Connect, whether it is the work we are doing with NRM Regions Queensland around projects for landholders for regeneration, whether it is the work we are doing with the likes of the Commonwealth Bank around modular methods of construction and better financial opportunities both for manufacturers and for individuals around what is called MMC in housing, we are looking at how the parts of this agency can be brought to bear on some of those particular issues.

Finally, members, the scope of our agency means that we work across a range of government departments but we also have connections to a range of statutory authorities and others that broadly sit under this portfolio—so they are not us but they sit under this portfolio. An example of that is Resources Safety and Health Queensland, who is the mining safety regulator in this state. We have the coexistence institution such as Coexistence Queensland, the Land Access Ombudsman, the Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment that sits in Minister Leahy's part of the world that has a connection to the work that we do. We also have Titles Queensland that was in government but now sits slightly outside of government. Amy, in her role as deputy director-general, is the Registrar of Titles, so we still have that connection there.

As a result of the machinery-of-government changes that happened in November, we also have in this broad portfolio under our minister QRIDA. Members will be familiar with them not only from some of the work they have done in the provision of loans, grants and support to primary producers over many decades now but also in recent years from some of the work they particularly do in disaster management and the disaster recovery space.

That is a brief overview of our agency. I hope I have not used up too much time. We are certainly happy to elaborate on any of that or, indeed, other questions that the committee has.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. I hand over to the member for Stretton for the first question.

Mr MARTIN: I want to ask a question about tariffs in relation to possible tariffs that might be introduced by the USA. Has the department considered how this might affect local Queensland manufacturing? What Queensland industries are at risk and in what areas?

Mr Fraine: I might make a couple of preliminary comments and ask a couple of my colleagues to add to that. We have looked at that from a couple of perspectives initially. One is any potential impacts in terms of the resources part of our industry. In that regard, certainly around things like steel tariffs, not a lot of what we produce in this state is exported to the US, so in that direct space less so.

In the case of manufacturing, which I think is where your interest was, our early analysis would suggest that there are things we need to be mindful of and aware of. We are working with our manufacturers through the hubs and through the policy work we do around both the immediate circumstance of what is looking like happening with tariffs but also where some of the broader steps may go as tariffs come into place and as others react to those tariffs. It is early days but we know, in speaking to some of our manufacturers—I was in Cairns last week and spoke with a couple of steel fabricators up there—that they are keeping a close eye on this at the moment and we are having those conversations with them.

Mr DALTON: Thank you very much for that very detailed and interesting introduction. My question is about the workforce. It is very tight in all areas. Specifically looking at the Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy, how are they going? How many schools are involved and how many students are coming out and starting work in this area?

Mr Fraine: Indeed, as you will be aware, again there is an election commitment around expansion of the Minerals and Energy Academy. The good news for members is that the academy, through its application of the Gateway to Industry Schools program, is doing great work around getting students in and through and giving them both exposure to and skill sets in this space. They operate the QMEA through a set of partnerships through Minister Bates' part of the world in particular. Both our department and Minister Bates' department look at basically three KPIs for them. One is around the number of participating schools. The second is around participation rates in general and participation rates for specific groups, whether there are young women or First Nations people, to make sure there is a broad spread of students going through. The third is the actual delivery of workshops in an outreach sense.

The good news for committee members is that the work of the QMEA in its most recent evaluation came up very positive. In that regard, the election commitment, which we are working with Minister Bates' agency on at the moment in terms of implementation, will look to expand that good work into a range of other schools and a range of other opportunities. We are just, as I mentioned, in those early phases of scoping where the expansion goes to.

Mr SMITH: Continuing on from the member for Stretton's questions around tariffs, has the minister requested a brief from the department specifically on the tariffs to be implemented by the United States?

Mr Fraine: In terms of the interactions we have with the minister and the conversations we have with him, we do cover those sorts of issues with him, yes.

Mr SMITH: Did the minister request a specific briefing solely on that matter?

CHAIR: Point of order: that is a question for the minister, not for the director-general. Member, please rephrase or move on.

Mr SMITH: Did the department at any time receive a direct request from the minister for an exclusive briefing on tariffs?

Mr Fraine: Yes.

Mr SMITH: Could the department please state on what date that occurred? You can take it on notice.

Mr Fraine: I am happy to find that information for the member. I do not have that immediately to hand.

Mr G KELLY: I am interested in the regional development of Central Queensland, which is the patch I am from. What initiatives is the department looking at for regional development to encourage new economic opportunities in regional and rural areas?

Mr Fraine: Jason, I might ask you to speak to that and then I will chime in.

Mr Kidd: We are very excited to have Regional and Rural Development combine with the Manufacturing branch in my division and also to be able to work with our colleagues in Lands and Georesources. We saw enormous opportunities there from the Regional and Rural Development perspective. Our focus is on sustainable, long-term regional development and therefore jobs and employment prospects in regional and rural areas of the state. As the DG might have mentioned, it is making sure that the key wealth generators of this state lead to opportunities for people living outside of South-East Queensland.

Some of the key initiatives that we have in Regional and Rural Development is we have a team of regionally-based engagement officers. Their job is to get out and about connecting direct with regional and rural stakeholders to make sure that the voice of regions is considered in government decision-making policy and programs. We think that is a critical part of the job.

The DG mentioned we have recently taken on the role of oversight for QRIDA. We have a great potential there in terms of the grants, loans, debt management and other services that QRIDA is very experienced in providing to regional and rural areas to small businesses, primary producers and not-for-profits. There is a great potential for us to continue building on that QRIDA work and look for new areas to expand that into, and they have an interest in working with us on that in this new portfolio.

We run a program called the Regional Collaborative Governance Model which is really about the government players coming together in regional leadership networks at the regional level to make sure we get the relevant departments coming together to talk about place-based initiatives and the cumulative impact of large-scale projects in regions. That is basically to get government working in a more coordinated and collaborative way to respond to that community intel that we pick up, and then as I said feeding through to policy and programs decision-making.

They are some of the key programs that we run. At the moment we are also finalising the last round of the Building our Regions grants program which you would be familiar with. That last round had a focus on water and sewerage infrastructure through the local councils. That is an example of some of the areas.

Mr Fraine: As I talked about in my introduction, one of the pieces that we are also doing in this portfolio around Regional and Rural Development is how we bring the lens of regional Queensland to some of the other programs and some of the other initiatives that government are working on. Country Roads Connect is an example in that transport and road space but there are others as well.

Mr KATTER: I understand there are a lot of barriers in trying to incentivise or stimulate manufacturing. It is a tough gig. We would all agree there has been a diminution in the manufacturing output. Mount Isa is a bit different. It is classed as advanced manufacturing—taking bare rock to 99.9 per cent copper at the refinery.

A common denominator, as we see it—and thanks for mentioning the Esmeralda Graphinex project at Croydon—is that it always comes back to utilities. It is outside your portfolio, I know; I am going a bit wide here but it does come back to the point. They did the National Competition Policy which took utilities—like our power, water and essential parts of this process—and put the focus on making them money-making commercial entities, and I would argue that was never their intention. They were industry enablers. Lake Julius now could not sell water to a mine, could not reach a commercial agreement, because they said they had a responsibility to get return on investment for the Queensland taxpayer. It was 50 per cent paid for by the mine. They built it for expansion of mining, not to make money for taxpayers.

I would say that these utilities are working against the interests of advanced manufacturing. Is there any discussion to address that? It is a fairly common denominator with rail, power and everything—that they have this commercial focus—and in terms of Sunwater and Lake Julius the income they get off it is a pittance. The ideology and principles behind it run in conflict with our ability to try and keep the copper smelter going by getting a little lever going.

Mr Fraine: You are right. That set of issues has been commonly raised with me since I have been in this portfolio by a number of resource companies and by a number of manufacturers around your point of power, water and transport—those three critical, if you like, trunk infrastructure pieces for business. While those levers sit outside of our portfolio in a direct sense, certainly what we have been doing with a number of proponents—and we were speaking very recently to Eva Copper, for instance, and they had some issues in this space that they are looking at—is we take those issues and raise them and work on them with other parts of government around looking to provide that certainty and surety around what they need for their businesses.

Mr KATTER: I have another question on regional communities. I often ask this question in this space because I was someone who lived and breathed it out there as an ex-valuer who used to get involved in the lending area. I know exactly what you are talking about in the funding of modular homes with the progress payments because I used to be right in the middle of that as a valuer. That is good that you are working in that space.

The Burketown Post Office just closed down which was their only retail bank facility. We have always been an advocate for turning them into a lending facility and expanding, which again is a federal issue. It goes back to the point of lending in these towns. For anyone west of the Great Divide trying to get a business loan, it is astronomically more difficult and that is a pretty big handbrake to have on any advancement. A lot of the peripheral industry around manufacturing bases is out there. That is another piece of the puzzle.

Mr Fraine: Indeed. I do not know if Jason mentioned it, but Minister Last is the minister who has responsibility for Northern Australia in terms of that state and federal interplay. Along with his colleagues from the Northern Territory and Western Australia, they have a program of work and from time to time they have meetings throughout the year on these topics. From the last time I was in that portfolio, that was a matter that was under discussion and I imagine it still is.

Mr Kidd: Yes, there is a specific working group under that Northern Australia initiative focused on housing and particularly this modern method in the construction space.

Mr KATTER: And lending?

Mr Kidd: And the lending issue came up. The department facilitated a workshop in September last year. The Commonwealth Bank attended that and got a very positive outcome out of that in terms of them changing their lending criteria to enable more loans into that space.

Mr KATTER: I think they will need more than that.

CHAIR: I have a question around the funding for the NRM groups that was an election commitment. I understand the memorandums of understanding have been signed with NRMs. That is complementing the Nurturing Nature: Cultivating Culture program, which is another \$190 million. How do we see the dissemination of funds to the regional NRM groups? Is it grant contestable? How do we see that rolling out?

Mr Fraine: I will do a general line and then I will throw to Amy on this one. In terms of something you mentioned in your introduction, the \$117 million, which was the election commitment in this space, is effectively taking the request of NRMQ and that \$196 million and moving it into what will be implemented. The work in the MOU has been around how we set the program up, and discussions are underway currently around the determination of projects in that sense. The projects will be going to the 12 member groups of NRMQ. That was an element of the election commitment, and the work is underway at the moment around getting into the detail of both the projects themselves and the distribution method. Amy, is there anything else?

Ms Rosanowski: I think that essentially answers the question. We are working very closely with NRMQ and representatives of the NRM groups on how that gets out the door. We are looking forward to being able to enter into those grants and get the money out for the on-ground outcomes soon.

CHAIR: I guess they would have had to have shovel-ready projects to be ready this soon after the January announcements.

Ms Rosanowski: There is a mixture of ones which are shovel-ready—and we are looking to see how we can get those moving sooner—and others which are going to require some development to be able to get ready to get that out the door.

CHAIR: Do we see any changes with the North Queensland event potentially affecting Far North NRM groups?

Ms Rosanowski: We are talking to the groups about how we can make sure the funding is designed in a way that enables it to be responsive when there are natural disasters to make sure we are still achieving the outcomes but are able to respond appropriately. We know there are going to be events that happen over the course of the program that may interrupt the ability to roll particular activities out.

CHAIR: I give a shout-out to the Mackay group for their efforts.

Mr MARTIN: Could you update the committee on how industry is progressing with respect to the transition arrangements that were put in place to protect the rivers and flood plains in the Lake Eyre Basin?

Mr Fraine: In terms of that matter, as members of the committee may be aware, that is currently status quo and industry are working to transition to those arrangements. I think it is fair to say that there are a range of views amongst industry and other stakeholders around where that currently sits, but certainly in terms of the current position it remains as it is. Industry is making transition to that within both the strategic environmental area but also the other areas of the Lake Eyre Basin outside that. Andrew, do you have anything more specific to add to that? In large part, given the amendments made in August last year, industry is making moves to adapt and adjust.

Mr Grabski: I will only say that there were also a number of matters that were left that we need to examine and look further at in respect of the amendments that were made to the regulations such as there are perhaps additional things that need to be looked at in terms of the petroleum and gas act and the granting of tenures around the new expanded SEAs and so on. There is a bit of work in that space.

Mr Fraine: The question is an interesting one in the sense that we are at an interesting point in the energy cycle around gas. We know that gas will be a crucial part of the energy system for some decades to come at this point. I think all members would have seen in the media some of the challenges that some of the southern states are seeing with their upcoming potential gas supplies moving into winter this year. We know from reports released earlier this year that the gas supplies available in this country are probably going to, with some peaks and troughs, get us through to potentially around 2028 but there will be intermittent shortages. From about that 2028 period, there are some structural issues with how much gas there is to meet demand. That is something that a number of governments, including the Queensland state government, are turning their minds to.

Mr SMITH: I want to return to the date on which the minister was provided with an exclusive briefing by the department on the proposed US tariffs on steel and aluminium. Can the department please provide this committee with that particular briefing document?

Mr Fraine: That is not a question that I am in a position to answer.

CHAIR: That is out of order. You have to ask the minister those sorts of questions.

Mr SMITH: I was just wondering if the briefing document that has been put up by the department could be shared with this committee so that we could have a better understanding of the concerns of the department around the potential tariffs being implemented by the USA.

CHAIR: Do you have a second question, Member?

Mr SMITH: That is the question. Are you ruling it out, and under which standing order?

CHAIR: Schedule 3.

Mr SMITH: Under which standing order in particular?

CHAIR: You are asking a question that should be asked of the minister.

Mr SMITH: No, this is from the department.

CHAIR: Are you arguing with me?

Mr SMITH: Can the department please provide this committee with the briefing document that outlines the department's concerns and analysis of potential tariffs being implemented by the USA on steel and aluminium in Queensland?

CHAIR: That does not change the content, in my opinion. I am happy for you to ask a separate question.

Mr SMITH: Chair, if we are going to play a protection racket, that is very concerning from yourself. It is quite concerning.

CHAIR: Okay. Moving on, I call the member for Mirani.

Mr G KELLY: I want to go to something that has been flagged with me for a while now. What has the feedback been from manufacturers on gas spot market energy prices, considering the higher levels we have seen over previous years? Has there been discussion with other departments to help manage these challenges and look for other opportunities?

Mr Fraine: As I mentioned earlier, certainly in terms of as a department, we are out on the ground talking with manufacturers. Energy in general, including spot pricing, is a key issue for them around both how they manage their business on a day-to-day basis but, more importantly, how they plan for future expansion or just making future decisions about the nature of that business. It is something that in terms of our conversations with other portfolios, in this case under this government under the Treasurer's portfolio, for example, that we raise in terms of I guess ease of doing business in this state or the pieces around business, and that is the topic of ongoing discussion that we have with them. Is there anything you want to add?

Mr Kidd: Probably just a general comment that through our manufacturing program and our hubs the focus is on helping manufacturers to look for ways to reduce their costs, including energy which is a key focus for us. We run a range of programs and workshops and we have some grants in that space in terms of energy efficiency. It does not go direct to that issue of price and marketing, but that is assistance that we can help provide for whatever the energy is because obviously that is a key issue raised with manufacturers.

Mr KATTER: It is probably better that I start with an example on the issue of government procurement and its link with Queensland businesses. Maleny Dairies were pretty frustrated because they lost some government tenders for their milk. They say, 'Well, we pay the highest price to all our farmers. We are a Queensland-based company.' Do you think work could be done in the space of procurement? I know it goes against the anti-competitive laws. It will probably conflict with some other policy areas in other departments, but is there work being done in that space? Is it being looked at?

Mr Fraine: As a Sunshine Coast resident, I can reveal I have Maleny milk sitting in my fridge at home at the moment.

Mr KATTER: I knew you would have.

Mr Fraine: This is a piece, and I will throw to Jason on this, that government has been, as you know, working on for some time, whether it be through the procurement policy and its particular effects, but certainly in terms of how we work with our manufacturers and input into that policy. There certainly is work that our team does in that space.

Mr Kidd: I sit on the whole-of-government procurement committee. That has each of the category council areas that lead procurement in different spaces, but my role is more about looking at the impact on manufacturers and also the opportunities in regional and rural areas out of the government spend, which is obviously large. Obviously, there is clearly a focus at the moment through that committee on looking for greater efficiencies and the expenditure of government moneys. My role is to continually put on the table to consider the broader policy benefits of procurement into regional and rural companies and also looking at where those companies that are procuring services to government are getting their manufactured products from, so you go one step further down the line, and therefore protecting Queensland jobs. As part of that work we are looking at other jurisdictions and some interesting work that is happening, for example, in some of the other states about some of the policy settings around how you can look to support manufacturers, but that is fairly early days.

Mr KATTER: That is a good answer. I have your name now too, Jason.

CHAIR: Is there an update on the Toowoomba manufacturing hub and where that is at?

Mr Kidd: I am pleased to say we are recruiting our staff. We already have a manager in place. We are looking at a couple of key options for the premises—for the actual hub—at the moment and getting some designs drawn up which we will be able to put forward to the DG for consideration. In advance of getting the actual location we have a manager on the ground in Toowoomba who is already starting that work and we have recruited to the other two key positions as well. The hubs around the state usually have two to three officers, so there will be three operating out of Toowoomba and those are now employed. Good progress is being made to work with that region. Once we have a physical presence that will only boost the profile of the hub in the area.

Mr MARTIN: In relation to tariffs again, and to get a bit more specific, in your briefing has the department looked at how many Queensland jobs could be lost as a result of any American import tariffs? Have you got to that stage?

Mr Fraine: To my knowledge in our briefing—or in our analysis—we have not got into a job-by-job impact.

Mr MARTIN: Do you think that is something—

Mr Fraine: As I mentioned in response to the earlier question, as this situation unfolds around tariffs over time, both ourselves and I imagine other agencies around government will continue to do work in this space.

Mr DALTON: This is transport related. We all travel around this state. The Country Roads Connect program is a LNP commitment of \$100 million to pave some dirt roads. I am just wondering if you could go through the methodology of how you choose which roads, because there are plenty and obviously the budget will run out if you try to do too many. What is the methodology?

Mr Fraine: Probably for us this will be a short and sharp one in the sense of that is a program primarily run through Minister Mickelberg's part of the world and through Transport and Main Roads, but we are certainly working with them as they are developing the criteria. Certainly from our perspective, by the very nature of the name 'country roads' it is looking at how regional parts of Queensland are getting the benefits of having some roads that have never been sealed, sealed, so that they can have improvements in productivity, safety and around times of emergency—of natural disasters and weather events as we see. They are the types of things that are part of those conversations at the moment and will ultimately be developed through Transport and Main Roads in Minister Mickelberg's part of the world.

Mr SMITH: I would like to move a motion that this committee requests that the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development provide the exact briefing document provided to the minister in the briefing with the department pertaining to the proposed tariffs on steel and aluminium imposed by the United States of America.

CHAIR: You can move your motion and we can vote on it, but schedule 8 rules out of order what you are asking for so it cannot be done under the standing orders.

Mr MARTIN: Correct me if I am wrong, Chair, for motions would we not go into a private session, move the motion and then come back?

CHAIR: You want to suspend this hearing to move a motion? I point out that we have high-level officials here talking about very important issues and you are outside standing orders.

Mr SMITH: These tariffs are very important for Queensland jobs. We need to know.

CHAIR: Why don't you ask another question then?

Mr SMITH: I have moved a motion.

CHAIR: Would you bear with us.

Proceedings suspended from 12.08 pm to 12.11 pm.

Mr SMITH: As we mentioned, QRIDA has come into the scope of the department. I am wondering what the mechanics of the working relationship are between the department and QRIDA and how they coexist?

Mr Fraine: QRIDA—sorry if I am telling you things you already know here—as a statutory body have their own legislative requirements and are governed by a board, effectively. They, like other statutory bodies, have a relationship both with a minister—for instance, in the case of the current natural disaster or weather events and the role that QRIDA play in the disbursement of cat C and cat D; that comes through a ministerially signed notice—and with the department in terms of how we both work together in the space of something like the regional and rural development part of this agency, how the work that we are doing aligns with the work that they are doing either through the grants and loans that they do or, indeed, where they see other opportunities for, say, primary producers for broader elements of the supply chain in regional communities. They sit in that separate-to-us relationship with their own board and their own legislation, but they have those relationships with both ourselves as a department and certainly the minister in terms of how some of the work they do gets triggered, for want of a better term.

Mr Kidd: Supporting what the DG said, structurally on that board is Treasury and our department's DGs, or their delegate, actually. I sit on that board together with independent members just to help make sure we are closely involved in the work of QRIDA and then, as the DG mentioned, that informs briefings to the minister at relevant points.

Mr G KELLY: Graham, we all know how important our mining industry is. What is the department doing to help expand our gas production to ensure that Queensland has enough, especially because of how important it is to our manufacturing industry and—I will say it straight out—how important coal is to keeping the lights on? Obviously, moving forward we have the renewable charge—is it too expensive or is it not—but, as far as we are concerned, we look to the comforts we have at the moment so the reliability of it is important.

Mr Fraine: As I mentioned earlier, certainly gas is that critical piece, along with a range of other resources, around energy in particular. Of course, it is a key part of the export market in this state as well. The discussions we are having across a number of the basins are looking at where there are opportunities for the various resource companies in this space to look at best utilisation of the tenements they have. Going back to an earlier question of the member for Stretton, one of the first things that this minister did on becoming minister last year was to sign off on extensions to certain leases and tenements that were already in place in places such as the Lake Eyre Basin to provide some certainty to industry around some of their existing pieces. Through a number of grants, both within this department and more broadly, we also have opportunities for producers of gas and petroleum in this instance to look at accessing those for a range of exploration and other purposes. In a broader sense, we are looking at how we look to incentivise, where relevant and where appropriate, a number of projects in this space. Andrew, was there anything in particular you wanted to add around that?

Mr Grabski: I guess probably the emerging work of the Resources Cabinet Committee in an early focus on improving efficiency with which approvals are processed and undertaken.

Mr MARTIN: I have a question about jobs in the mining industry. There was obviously quite a large campaign from the Queensland Resources Council about increased coal royalties. One of the things that they said it would impact was job numbers in the mining industry. Are job numbers about the same or have they increased or decreased?

Mr Fraine: In terms of how job numbers have gone over time, certainly I am very happy to provide some of that information to the committee. Off the top of my head, I do not have those numbers to hand. We know, again through talking with both resource companies and regional communities, that finding the skilled workers needed is proving a challenge. I know members will be aware of this from across a number of industries, whether it is resources, whether it is manufacturing—regardless of industry. I think that is something that both the work that we are doing and the work that Minister Bates' department will be doing certainly in our part of the skills space will be an ongoing bit of work during the course of this term.

CHAIR: Director-General, has the issue of Moore Park Surf Life Saving Club come across your desk?

Mr Fraine: I cannot say that that one has. Let me check with the deputy.

CHAIR: We have a natural disaster with the surf club falling into the ocean. It is on NRM land and it is a state asset. I have it on record now that I have asked the question.

Mr Fraine: That is the point: it has now come across my desk, Chair.

CHAIR: Any support we can get will be much appreciated.

Mr SMITH: Following advice from the Integrity Commissioner, the minister has rightfully passed the responsibility of a decision on MDL 3040 to another minister. Of course, it was completely right to do so and we respect that matter. I believe that responsibility has now been taken on by the Attorney-General. Whistleblowers have told me that the office of the member for Burnett has emailed them saying that there will be a positive decision announced within two weeks time. Can the department confirm if the Attorney-General has provided them with her final consideration?

Mr Fraine: I can confirm, yes, that it is something to be considered by the Attorney-General. I can also confirm that Fox Resources have provided all the information sought by the department and we are currently giving it due consideration ahead of providing advice and briefings to the Attorney-General.

Mr SMITH: Is the department able to state whether or not the Attorney-General has given the department her final consideration?

Mr Fraine: No, she has not.

Mr DALTON: A massive manufacturing area in Mackay is Paget. Is there anything specific that your department will be doing to help that area grow and really establish itself as a world leader in resources?

Mr Fraine: I will speak to the question and then I will throw to Jason. You are quite right: for any member of the committee who wants to go and see a fascinating industrial area, Paget in Mackay has some of the best innovation going on across a range of sectors, particularly around METS—mining, engineering and technical services—and some of the supporting industries that are a supply chain for METS in particular. Through our Mackay hub, we have formed a very strong relationship with a lot of businesses in the Paget area and more broadly in Mackay. I seem to remember, from last time I was in this portfolio, the most amazing earring makers, Stomping Elephants, in Mackay. They are a great manufacturer as well so it is not just in the METS space.

Certainly in Paget a number of businesses have had the benefit of hub grants, of the workshops that the hubs have grown and I would have to go back through my memory of some of the Made in Queensland grants as well. Certainly, there is a strong engagement because of the value that Paget provides both for Mackay and the Mackay community and also more broadly for the manufacturing ecosystem in this state. It is a continued focus for us as the hubs progress their work. Jason, is there anything you wanted to add?

Mr DALTON: It is a world leader with the Resources Centre of Excellence.

Mr Fraine: Yes, indeed it is, which is just coming to the finishing stage of stage 2 of their FlexiLab work in coming months. A lot of exciting things are happening at the RCOE; you are right, Member.

Mr MARTIN: I have a question about the Mount Gravatt campus of Griffith University. I understand the NRM manages the lease for the Queensland government. Before I ask the question, I declare a conflict. My son goes to Yarranlea Primary School, which is located on the lease site. It is a small school of about 50 students that is based at the Mount Gravatt campus. In the public interest, Chair, and with the committee's approval, can I still ask the question?

CHAIR: Indeed.

Mr MARTIN: There is obviously a lot of concern at the school about extending the lease. It looks like Griffith University will potentially not be renewing the lease so it is all up in the air. The concern of the mums and dads of all the students is: what will happen if Griffith University does not continue the lease? Obviously, it is a very large site. There is a lot of potential there, I think. There are also a lot of questions. Do you or any of your deputies have an update on the Mount Gravatt campus?

Mr Fraine: Similar to the chair's question, that is not one that has come across my desk at this point. I suspect Amy may have a bit more information.

Ms Rosanowski: I am seeking some up-to-date information. My recollection is that it is still with Griffith University to make a decision about so we have not done anything pre-emptively ahead of that. If there is an update, I will let you know as soon as I get it through.

CHAIR: I want to ask about the construction pipelines. Is the department doing any extra work in trying to source extractive or quarry materials such as sand and other blue metals that will be needed?

Mr Fraine: As a number of members around the table would know, quarrying is a topic of particular interest, particularly to a number of local governments around the state. Amy, I might ask you to talk generally to where the quarrying story is at, noting that a lot of that is led through Minister Perrett's part of the world. Certainly, we have an interest in that space.

Ms Rosanowski: We are working with the Department of Primary Industries, but it is being led through them.

CHAIR: I understand that sand comes under Minister Leahy's portfolio in some respects, because it relates to waterways as well. I understand it is complex.

Mr G KELLY: Graham, in the area where I live people have grave concerns about renewable energy projects. Are they allowed to build on grazing homestead lease country or do they have to have a change of use?

Mr Fraine: Amy, do you have an answer?

Ms Rosanowski: We do have the recent changes to the impact assessable nature of renewable energy projects so I could not answer that question specifically. I think they have been released only in the past couple of weeks.

Mr G KELLY: That is okay. That is fine.

CHAIR: That concludes the briefing. Thank you all for the information that you have provided today. Thank you to the Hansard reporters, broadcast staff and the secretariat. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. The date for the report that the member for Bundaberg is chasing is 28 February, if you do not mind. With that, I declare this public briefing closed.

The committee adjourned at 12.27 pm.