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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 LP Power MP

Staff present:

Ms K O'Sullivan—Committee Secretary
Mr R Pelenyi—Assistant Committee Secretary

PUBLIC BRIEFING—INQUIRY INTO THE RESOURCES SAFETY AND HEALTH QUEENSLAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2026

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 25 March 2026

Brisbane

WEDNESDAY, 25 MARCH 2026

The committee met at 9.30 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open the public briefing for the committee's inquiry into the Resources Safety and Health Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. My name is Steve Bennett. I am the member for Burnett and chair of the committee. With me here today are: James Martin MP, the member for Stretton and deputy chair; Nigel Dalton MP, the member for Mackay; Glen Kelly MP, the member for Mirani; Linus Power MP, the member for Logan, who is substituting for Tom Smith, the member for Bundaberg; and Mr Robbie Katter MP, 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 officers are here to provide factual or technical information. Any questions seeking an opinion about policy should be directed to the minister or left to debate on the floor of the House.

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

I welcome representatives from the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development who have been invited to brief the committee on the bill. Please remember to press your microphone on before you start speaking and off when you are finished. I invite you to brief the committee, after which committee members will have some questions for you.

COOPER, Ms Claire, Executive Director, Georesources Policy, Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development

WENCK, Ms Amber, Director, Georesources Policy, Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development

Ms Cooper: I thank the committee for the invitation to provide a briefing on the Resources Safety and Health Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the lands on which we meet today, the Turrbal and Yagara people, and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging.

The bill introduces amendments across multiple resources acts to enhance governance, oversight and operational efficiency within Queensland's resources sector. In 2025 government commissioned a review of the Queensland resources and health regulatory model to assess the effectiveness of the model five years after establishment of Resources Safety and Health Queensland, or RSHQ. This was led by Professor Susan Johnston AM. The review made 16 recommendations, three of which require legislative amendments that are addressed by this bill. The remainder are operational recommendations that are being progressed currently by the chief executive officer of RSHQ.

Recommendations 1 to 3 focus on improving the strategic oversight and accountability of RSHQ while retaining and strengthening the Coalmining Safety and Health Advisory Committee and the Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee. I will refer to these as CSMHAC and MSHAQ.

The bill establishes the RSHQ board—an independent, skills-based governance board which collectively must have knowledge and experience across: the regulation of safety and health in the mining, petroleum and gas and explosives industries; governance and risk management; stakeholder engagement with government, industry and workforce representatives; investigations and

enforcement; occupational health, hygiene and psychosocial hazards; organisational effectiveness, culture and regulatory performance; and financial and management and strategic oversight. These skills will create a balanced board with a mix of independent, industry and workforce informed perspectives.

While the board will have focus on strategic oversight, the inspectorates and divisions of RSHQ will retain operational discretion over enforcement and regulation. This delineation ensures the board provides guidance and accountability without interfering in the day-to-day operations. The CEO of RSHQ will now be accountable to the board for the organisation's performance, embedding an additional layer of accountability within the regulatory framework.

The bill makes amendments to CSMHAC and MSHAQ. These committees will now be chaired by a member of the RSHQ board and will report to the board on promoting and protecting the safety and health of persons at mines or who may be affected by mining operations. These advisory committees will remain tripartite, with representatives from the regulator, mining operations, companies, industry bodies and mine workers. The role of CSMHAC and MSHAQ will also be strengthened, being able to periodically review the effectiveness of regulations, guidelines and standards under the resources health and safety legislation. This reinstates the function removed by the RSHQ Act and provides a forum for testing regulatory changes with representatives of the communities most affected by them.

Recommendation 2 of the review, which proposes retaining the Commissioner for Resources Safety and Health, was not supported by the government. Consequently, the bill removes the commissioner role, transferring its functions to the RSHQ board. This is supported by the review's analysis that the commissioner role had not served as an effective source of strategic directional regulatory oversight due to the ill-defined purpose of the role and a lack of clear performance metrics to measure the role's effectiveness. By transferring the commissioner's responsibilities to the RSHQ board, the bill establishes a clear delineation between the board's strategic oversight role and RSHQ's operational responsibilities.

The board will set and monitor strategic performance indicators for RSHQ, ensuring the regulator remains accountable and effective. Notably, the review found that some stakeholders valued the commissioner's role in industry engagement and outreach, pointing to the merit of the commissioner as a clearly identifiable and accessible point of engagement with industry. Other stakeholders raised systemic safety and health concerns as well as other emerging risks and concerns. In response to this, the bill incorporates the commissioner's stakeholder engagement functions into the responsibilities of the RSHQ board. The board will be required to engage with industry and workforce representatives to address safety and health matters, ensuring RSHQ maintains strong and effective stakeholder relationships following the repeal of the commissioner's role. It is noted that CSMHAC and MSHAQ will also provide a point of stakeholder engagement.

The bill will also implement reforms that support the government's decision to optimise governance of Queensland's coexistence institutions and wind back plans to fund the Land Access Ombudsman, or LAO, through a resource industry funding model which was to automatically commence in June 2026. The bill repeals this funding model, with government to continue funding the LAO. This will be supported by a statutory annual budget process, with the LAO working with an advisory council to review annual budgetary need to support the effective delivery of the LAO's functions. The establishment of an advisory council for the LAO supports stronger governance arrangements for the LAO by providing oversight and advice on budget matters and policy issues.

To optimise the operation of coexistence institutions the bill introduces a dual role for members of this advisory council. Coexistence Queensland members appointed under the Coexistence Queensland Act will be taken to be the LAO advisory council. The government wishes to take a similar approach, with the chief executive officer of Coexistence Queensland also holding the office of the LAO. Appointments of these dual roles will only occur under the Coexistence Queensland Act and then will be deemed to be appointments under the LAO Act.

Although conflicts of interest are not inherently established by this proposal, it is acknowledged there may be circumstances where the proposed approach might cause conflict and raise questions around independence, so the bill introduces safeguards to mitigate this and maintain separation of the LAO and advisory council responsibilities from their broader Coexistence Queensland roles. Importantly, both institutions remain independent from government departments. Provisions are introduced to delineate the functions of the Coexistence Queensland CEO and the LAO and Coexistence Queensland members and the LAO advisory council. The responsibilities of each role are clearly defined under distinct and separate acts to avoid potential overlap or confusion.

The bill also introduces measures to ensure operational separation is maintained. This is achieved through a provision preventing Coexistence Queensland members delegating functions to the CEO that may give rise to a potential conflict of interest for the CEO acting in a dual capacity. Delegation provisions have also been included to enable the LAO to delegate their functions to an appropriately qualified officer to avoid conflict due to their dual role. The advisory council will also monitor the LAO's independence and provide advice on policy, procedural issues and funding matters. I note that through the submission process a question was raised as to whether or not the LAO's remit will be expanded to the renewable energy industry. I can confirm that this is not progressed in this bill.

The bill also proposes several amendments to the Mineral Resources Act 1989 aimed at modernising processes, improving fairness and reducing administrative inefficiencies for both industry and government. This includes replacing references to a map with special data to better align statutory requirements with technology. The statutory show cause process is being extended to non-payment of rent or penalties before a mining tenement may be cancelled. To improve efficiencies, amendments will allow mining tenement holders to lodge renewal applications right up to the date of expiry of their tenement without first seeking the minister's approval. Also, the bill makes it clear that a mining tenement under renewal continues in force until a decision on the renewal application is made.

Thank you, Chair and members, for your time. My colleague and I will be very happy to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Ms Cooper. I will go to the member for Stretton for our first question.

Mr MARTIN: I will start off with a question about the independence of the board. One of my concerns and some of the concerns raised by the submitters was about the board's independence. It is something that is very important when it comes to workers' health and safety. It looks to me like the changes give lots more power to the minister. One of the reasons we had a commission was to have independence. If having a board gives additional ministerial discretion, allowing board members or the CEO to be removed for any reason, how do we protect that independence to ensure workers' safety?

Ms Cooper: In terms of the independence of the board, the board is a part of RSHQ itself so it is part of the organisation. That organisation is independent and is an independent statutory body, so it maintains that independence from government. In terms of the removal of board members, the bill includes measure to ensure transparency and accountability in the exercise of any ministerial discretion. For instance, the board proposed amendments to section 63 of the RSHQ Act, requiring the minister to provide a written statement of expectations to the RSHQ board which must be published on a Queensland government website. Additionally, the RSHQ annual report must include details of how the board or RSHQ has addressed the minister's expectations. These provisions ensure the minister's oversight is transparent and subject to public scrutiny. That will also be shown through reporting that they ordinarily do to the public.

Mr MARTIN: In terms of the ministerial statement you just mentioned, my understanding is that under the previous model any kind of directions had to be in the public interest. Now is there a requirement that the minister make those directions? Is there a public interest requirement for the minister or just a public statement?

Ms Cooper: There will continue to be those ministerial directions. They are not being amended under this act, so they will continue. It will not, of course, continue for the commissioner, but bringing in the idea of the statement of expectation is where the accountability comes in. Naturally, the exercise of any powers under the act needs to be within the purposes of the act, which is very much focused on of mine safety and health workers and anyone affected by mining operations.

Mr DALTON: It is always good to see how a change of mechanism will be evaluated. What mechanisms will be used to monitor and evaluate whether the bill's reforms are achieving their intended objectives?

Ms Cooper: There are a number of ways in which the operations of the board will be evaluated, through the normal mechanisms that we have for scrutiny of any kind of bill or government action. That will be through the estimates process, through the ordinary question time process that we have, and through ordinary government processes. There will also be a need to report on any of those expectations through the annual report, and any of the things that are occurring in terms of operational improvements through the annual report, there will be a requirement to be able to, through the annual reporting process, report on measures and KPIs in the ordinary way.

Mr POWER: Recommendation 2 of the Johnston report clearly stated that the commissioner should be retained for their independent role. At what point was the decision made to sack the commissioner?

Ms Cooper: The concerns about the removal of the commissioner are acknowledged, as we have seen through submissions. There is a real appreciation for the role the commissioner was taking to be able to be that point of engagement, to be able to hear industry concerns or workers' concerns—anyone's concerns. It is a very good role which, as I said earlier, will be transferred to the board. But in terms of a decision, it was made by government on the recommendations, and—

Mr POWER: On which recommendations?

Ms Cooper: On the review and the recommendations made—

Mr POWER: The review explicitly recommended against it.

Ms Cooper: Yes. The review made a recommendation to retain and government made a policy decision to—

Mr POWER: So Professor Johnston came forward and said, 'Retain the commissioner.'

CHAIR: Member, I remind you that government decisions are not for the departmental questioning line. If you want to—

Mr POWER: I have made no reference to anything about that. I simply asked about the timing and I am starting a new question.

CHAIR: If you can just make—

Mr POWER: Chair, respectfully—

CHAIR: Don't raise your voice, for one, and you did make a point about the commissioner being sacked, and I guess that was an imputation in the first instance. I am reminding you that policy decisions should be directed to the minister or to the—

Mr POWER: We are undoubtedly, through legislation, sacking the commissioner. Let's not have any bones about it.

CHAIR: Welcome to our committee.

Mr POWER: Chair, we have the rules here. They are there for a reason. I have made no imputation about a policy decision.

CHAIR: So can you please ask your question.

Mr POWER: Professor Johnston clearly said that the commissioner was not to be removed. All of the submitters have said that the commissioner should be retained. After Professor Johnston's recommendation that the commissioner be retained, was any consultation done before that decision was made? I want to make clear that that has nothing to do with the implementation of the decision, merely the consultation before the decision was made.

Ms Cooper: The review was done and there was a number of entities that were consulted in the course of Professor Johnston undertaking—

Mr POWER: No, I want to make it clear: after Professor Johnston said that the position should be retained, on the decision to sack the commissioner, was there any consultation done with anybody in the community after that point? Before the recommendation that it be kept and the minister's decision, what consultation was undertaken, either by the department or others?

Ms Cooper: None that the department is aware of. As I said, the report itself did canvas a lot of different opinions from a lot of different stakeholders. The report was provided to the government which included a lot of information. There were findings made and recommendations made, but the government also had the benefit of all of the discussion and analysis that was included in the report.

Mr G KELLY: Claire, for clarity, how were the arrangements changed for Coexistence Queensland and the Land Access Ombudsman?

Ms Cooper: The current role for the Land Access Ombudsman is around investigating disputes around alleged breaches of conduct and compensation agreements and make good agreements, and they also are able to recommend and advise to government about possible offences and systemic issues that might arise from land access disputes. Then we also have some changes that are set to come into place in June of this year under the Mineral and Energy Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024. They will implement changes to transition the LAO to a statutory body. They also have expansions to the LAO's remit, so beyond those investigations of disputes, they are able to investigate and resolve other types of disputes around other agreements, and also they are able

to offer alternate dispute resolution, including negotiating and renegotiating conduct and compensation agreements and make good agreements and other access agreements. That will be happening, and the bill does not change any of those changes in remit, nor does it change that transition into a statutory body. The one thing the bill does seek to amend is what was going to occur, which was to include a resources industry levy to fund the LAO. With that, there are some changes in the roles and responsibilities of the Advisory Council. It will be more around supporting in that budget process rather than supporting through the establishment and management of a levy.

Mr KATTER: My question is around the Land Access Ombudsman. We saw some submissions made around deficiencies in that area which were predicted. It was mostly around coal seam gas. I personally have had a lot of people complaining that there is still a massive imbalance between the landholders and the resource companies in those access agreements. Was that an issue acknowledged by the department in making that decision? Was it acknowledged that there was a deficiency there? Then how was this intended to help that deficiency or change anything? Making reference to the AgForce submission, it was saying that the focus has not been in the right area in repairing it, just changing the name or the title.

Ms Cooper: Very much the Land Access Ombudsman is an integral part of the land access framework, and the land access framework is in place to be able to promote and encourage as much coexistence as possible within communities and recognising that imbalance. The government was very much conscious of the role that LAO is seen to play, being an independent entity that can help landholders through the land access process through negotiating conduct and compensation agreements and make good agreements, so it was important to maintain that as a separate entity. So, while there are some efficiencies that were being taken advantage of and being able to co-locate to a certain—not necessarily co-locate, but the sharing of corporate systems, the sharing of expertise with Coexistence Queensland is intended to really be able to use that expertise and experience that Coexistence Queensland has gained in creating a firmer relationship between the two, but at the same time recognising that it is an important entity that needs to be maintained. Having a government fund it and also ensuring that it is still a free service was important in maintaining and improving the LAO service with that expanded remit.

Mr KATTER: It is fairly comprehensive. If I can come back to the initial point, was there a perceived deficiency to address there in making that change? Was it acknowledged? I think there is, but I am just not sure if the department acknowledges that in making that decision?

Ms Cooper: Government has definitely acknowledged the importance of having the LAO, and has acknowledged that by continuing to have those expanded remits continue to have free service available to landholders, knowing that it is very important in establishing those land access agreements.

Mr KATTER: But not explicitly referring to any deficiency or issue to be dealt with? You are saying to acknowledge we need something there? I am happy enough if that is the case, but—

Ms Cooper: That was not the focus of the government's proposed changes. The focus has been very much on governance and improving the governance of the LAO.

Mr KATTER: That answers my question, thank you.

CHAIR: Could you expand on the advisory boards, MSHAC and CMSHAC, a little for the committee's benefit? You said they were tripartite. Could you give some explanation around that? What are the roles and functions of those two?

Ms Cooper: CMSHAC and MSHAC are tripartite, as you say. They have representation from workers, from the regulator and from the industry.

CHAIR: Is it six on each one of these—the numbers?

Ms Cooper: I will find out the exact numbers for you, but their focus is very much on promoting and protecting the safety and health of persons in the mines and who may be affected at mine operations. They will retain their existing functions. I will find those functions for you. In terms of what is happening with the changes in this bill, it is about recognising the important role they play in being able to report to the minister and, in this instance, also reporting through to the board. They will be able to draw on their industry experience also by periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the regulations, the guidelines and standards, which was recognised as an important role that they did play but which had been removed in the establishment of the current resources safety and health model. On the—

CHAIR: We do not have to stress about it now. Maybe we can get some information before we close on what their actual roles are, if that is more convenient for you.

Ms Cooper: Thank you, yes.

CHAIR: We can keep the proceedings going. I know the members have other questions. If you can take that on notice and get back to us before the end of the meeting, please.

Ms Cooper: I will take that on notice.

Mr POWER: I am really glad that you talked about the important role of CSMHAC and MSHAC. They are fundamentally going to be changed by not having an independent chair. With the commissioner being abolished, the chair will be someone who, by definition from their industry experience, has conflicts of interest that may compromise the agendas put before CSMHAC and MSHAC?

Ms Cooper: By removing the commissioner role—

Mr POWER: Who had a statutory role chairing it; that is correct?

Ms Cooper: That is correct, and all of those functions are being transferred to the RSHQ board, which includes chairing CSMHAC and MSHAC. A member from the board will then share CSMHAC and MSHAC, and they will be decided upon by the chair of the RSHQ board who—

Mr POWER: Respectfully, it will not be the board that chairs it; it will be an individual appointed by the board who may have direct and specific conflicts with the agenda of CSMHAC or MSHAC.

Ms Cooper: There will still be the way in which CSMHAC and MSHAC operates. The changes to CSMHAC and MSHAC are only around the chairperson—it will be a different chairperson and they will have an additional function. In terms of their operations, if there are processes in place in order to ensure there are no conflicts of interest those processes will continue. They will kind of be managed through those current processes.

Mr POWER: We are abolishing section 57 and section 56, which states—

The commissioner must not ... engage in paid employment ...

They cannot directly have any financial benefit from the industry or specific companies. Almost everyone on the board will be the opposite. Section 56 will be abolished and section 57—the commissioner's conflicts-of-interest section—is also being abolished. Does that not put conflict of interest directly into the heart of CSMHAC and MSHAC?

CHAIR: I remind you that you are being asked for an opinion. You will have some discretion in how you answer that.

Mr POWER: That is a very good point. Could I rephrase?

CHAIR: Indeed.

Mr POWER: The abolishment of section 56—the commissioner must not engage in paid employment—and section 57—the conflicts-of-interest provisions—fundamentally change who the board appoints as the chair. Presumably they will be directly working for a coal company to have the relevant experience and then they will be chairing CSMHAC, including perhaps examining safety issues within their own mine or industry.

Ms Cooper: I cannot really comment on what experience or what employment potential a chair may have. I will need to take it on notice, if I can get back to you—

Mr POWER: But my assertion is not unreasonable.

Ms Cooper: I will have a look at what the responsibilities are of members of the RSHQ board in terms of those issues that you have raised, which is for the commissioner. I can get back to you on that.

Mr POWER: So no-one is subject to section 56 at all?

CHAIR: The witness has agreed to come back to you, member. I think we will take that as answered. Member for Mackay?

Mr DALTON: It is very enlightening. If the bill is implemented, what education materials, guidance or communication will be provided to industry participants and stakeholders to support their understanding of the new arrangements and processes? How will that information be delivered? What mechanisms will be used?

Ms Cooper: As we do when implementing any new changes, we will be providing as much information as possible on the changes and what kinds of impacts they will have. There will be a desire to let people understand and know what they might mean for them. Those materials will be developed in the usual way. We will also be working with RSHQ on gathering those materials and

making those available. We have been working closely with RSHQ on those types of things. Those materials are obviously something that we will be working on and making available so people understand the changes.

Mr DALTON: Thank you. I look forward to seeing them.

Mr MARTIN: I have a question going back to the make-up of the board. Some of the submitters, particularly the unions, are concerned that the make-up of the board is not expressly required to have worker representation. You were just talking about having tripartite representation on the two boards that sit below the RSHQ board, but I am not sure why the government has made the decision to remove that from the RSHQ board. I just wanted to point you towards the department's responses to some of the submissions, in particular the AWU's submission. Where a union has expressed that particular concern, the department states—

Worker representation is not excluded from the RSHQ Board ...

I have to say that I find it extraordinary. On a work health and safety board, should worker representation not be expressly included? Can a board be appointed with zero worker representation on it?

Ms Cooper: In terms of saying that worker representation is not excluded, its focus very much has been on what kinds of skills and skill mix are needed for the RSHQ board. In terms of the skill mix, any of those skills can be held by someone who is a worker representative. In that way, worker representatives are not excluded. It is true that there is not an express requirement that there must be a worker representative, and that is in recognition of the fact that CSMHAC and MSHAC have tripartite representation. There is representation from workers' representatives that definitely feeds into the government's arrangements for resources, safety and health. Within the idea of having knowledge and experience of the regulation of safety and health in the mining, petroleum, gas and explosives industry—which is one of the things that is listed—that could definitely be people who are on the ground and understand the perspective of workers.

CHAIR: Do you have anything to add to that, Ms Cooper? Have you finished?

Ms Cooper: I would also say that the bill has been designed to ensure the governing board collectively has the broad range of skills and experience needed, without requiring every individual to meet all of the criteria. It also allows for flexibility, as members can satisfy more than one area of expertise.

Mr MARTIN: It sounds like you are confirming that we could have an RSHQ board with zero worker representation on it—that is possible under these changes?

CHAIR: I do not think you need to answer that. It is asking for an opinion.

Mr MARTIN: I do not think that is an opinion, Chair.

CHAIR: I have made a ruling. It is fine.

Mr MARTIN: But it is not an opinion. I am asking—is the make-up—

CHAIR: You can have another question.

Mr MARTIN: Point of order: I have not asked for an opinion and I have not asked the department if they think it is a good idea or a bad idea. I have asked is it possible—under the new legislation that is coming, can they confirm that it is possible an RSHQ board will have zero worker representation on it?

CHAIR: I see that as a hypothetical opinion.

Mr MARTIN: How is that a hypothetical opinion? I am asking if the legislation—I think it is important. We are talking about workplace health and safety. It is a pretty straightforward question. It must come up at every industrial relations meeting and every bargaining session of a safety board in every industry, not just mining.

CHAIR: I just point out, member, that you have asked three or four questions on this issue. Is it fair to other members of the committee? If you want to prosecute that in a later debate, that will be fine. Moving on. Thank you for your point of order. Member for Mirani, you may ask your question.

Mr G KELLY: Thanks, Chair. Obviously there are concerns this morning about replacing the commissioner. Can you explain how a board will better serve the regulator with the functioning of this legislation?

Ms Cooper: Yes, the establishment of the RSHQ board is very much to respond to the review's findings around the need for accountability and transparency of RSHQ as an organisation. The real benefit that comes from establishing the RSHQ board is providing that strategic oversight and that

overview of all of the operations. It will be responsible for setting KPIs and measures to be able to measure the performance of the organisation as a whole and how it is ensuring the safety of workers throughout the resources industry.

There is also an express provision around the need for the board to have always in its mind the safety of the workers and the resources industry and anyone involved in it. It has been recognised that there has been a lack of accountability while RSHQ acted very much like an independent organisation. There was a lack of transparency and accountability for the performance, and this board brings that in, which can only ever be a good thing in terms of worker safety.

Mr POWER: I have a question about the Land Access Ombudsman and that process. I note that there is a proposal to remove the industry levy and fund it from the Consolidated Fund. Effectively, we levied very big businesses that are exploiting gas resources across Queensland in order to ensure they met community responsibility. Is it fair to say that we are taking that cost away from those who are making huge amounts of money out of gas—especially during this conflict—and transferring that cost to the Queensland public?

Ms Cooper: I can say that the resources industry has made it quite clear that issues like overregulation and the rising cost of doing business—labour costs, regulatory costs, taxation of royalties—are contributing to declining confidence in the sector in Queensland. Implementation of the industry funding model would create a cost to all resource authority holders, regardless of whether they utilise the LAO service, which increases industry's costs of doing business in Queensland. This is on top of paying royalties, rent and other levy requirements. Removing the industry levy arrangements would support the competitiveness of Queensland's resources sector.

Mr POWER: My question was pretty clear. This is a tax transfer away from big companies onto ordinary Queenslanders?

CHAIR: I think you are answering the question. You can proceed.

Ms Cooper: Thank you.

Mr POWER: Sorry?

CHAIR: Are you asking another question? You have asked your question and the witness was answering. You have interrupted again.

Mr POWER: The witness was in the middle of answering.

CHAIR: That is what I was saying, but it was interrupted by your own—

Mr POWER: You are just stopping the answer now.

CHAIR: I am suggesting that the witness continue answering the question, but you interrupted.

Mr POWER: That is good.

Ms Cooper: I was just checking to see whether or not you were asking my opinion on—

Mr POWER: No, it is a direct, factual question. We used to levy big business. We are now putting that levy on the Queensland public through the Consolidated Fund. Is that correct—yes or no?

Ms Cooper: It is continuing the government funding of LAO. The government has funded LAO. It was funded through our department—the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development—and that will continue to be the case. The cost to run the LAO was \$617,000 in the 2025-26 financial year. It is expected to be allocated \$622,000 for the 2026-27 financial year.

The ongoing budget requirement for the LAO is difficult to determine at the moment because there will be an expanded remit. We are not exactly sure what the demand for services will look like with that expanded remit. However, from 1 July 2026 the LAO will be required to prepare a budget of their estimated costs for the office for the next financial year. They will do that in consultation with the advisory council, which is part of this bill. This will then be approved by the minister.

During a financial year, the LAO will also prepare amendments to the office's budget, with approval from the minister. Any proposed funding will also be subject to endorsement of a budget proposal from the Cabinet Budget Review Committee. In order to minimise costs to the taxpayer, the office of the LAO will be co-located with Coexistence Queensland. We will utilise their established corporate services, staff and systems under a cost-sharing arrangement.

CHAIR: Just in closing, we wanted to make sure you have those couple of questions on notice. One was from the member for Stretton. Would you be able to share the details with us, please?

Ms Cooper: Yes, I can. There was a question around the membership for CSMHAC and MSHAC. There are 10 members on both CSMHAC and MSHAC. Their focus is on promoting the safety and health of persons at mine or persons who may be affected by mining operations.

CHAIR: There was a question that we were going to get back to you on.

Mr DALTON: I think it was how many were on the board.

CHAIR: We just got that—10 members on the board. There were definitely two questions. I just cannot recall the second one.

Mr POWER: We might have to do follow-up correspondence.

CHAIR: Sure. Thank you. We will close the proceedings. Thanks very much for your participation here today. We look forward to seeing you again soon.

Ms Cooper: Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 10.16 am.