



# ***STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND WORKS COMMITTEE***

Mr JJ McDonald MP—Chair  
Ms JM Bush MP  
Mr TA James MP  
Mr D Kempton MP  
Mr SR King MP  
Mr BJ Mellish MP

**Staff present:**

Ms S Galbraith—Committee Secretary  
Ms R Duncan—Assistant Committee Secretary

## **PUBLIC BRIEFING—PORTFOLIO BRIEFING DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND PUBLIC WORKS**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Wednesday, 2 April 2025**

**Brisbane**

## **WEDNESDAY, 2 APRIL 2025**

---

**The committee met at 10.06 am.**

**CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare open the public briefing of the Department of Housing and Public Works. My name is Jim McDonald. I am the member for Lockyer and chair of the committee. With me here today are Ms Jonty Bush, member for Cooper and deputy chair; Mr Terry James, member for Mulgrave; Mr David Kempton, member for Cook; Mr Shane King, member for Kurwongbah; and Mr Bart Mellish, member for Aspley.

Today we will hear from officials from the Department of Housing and Public Works. The purpose of today's briefing is capacity building and to further the committee's understanding of the department's key roles and portfolio responsibilities. At the outset I wish to thank the director-general and leadership team for making themselves available today.

The briefing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. 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 and any questions seeking an opinion about policy should be directed to the minister or left to debate on the floor of the House.

The 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. Finally, I remind everyone to press the microphone on before speaking and off when they are finished. I now welcome the director-general and officials from the Department of Housing and Public Works.

**AMOS, Ms Sarah, Deputy Director-General, Social and Affordable Housing Growth, Department of Housing and Public Works**

**BARRON, Ms Ainslie, Assistant Director-General, Building Policy, Department of Housing and Public Works**

**BENNETT, Mr Andrew, Deputy Director-General, Queensland Government Procurement, Department of Housing and Public Works**

**BRADY, Ms Tanya, Chief Financial Officer, Department of Housing and Public Works**

**CRIDLAND, Mr Mark, Director-General, Department of Housing and Public Works**

**HARVIE, Ms Kirstine, Acting Deputy Director-General, Policy, Performance and First Nations, Department of Housing and Public Works**

**HYDE, Mr Paul, Acting Deputy Director-General, Public Works, Department of Housing and Public Works**

**MASSON, Ms Angela, Deputy Director-General, Housing and Homelessness Services, Department of Housing and Public Works**

**NYE, Mr Matthew, Deputy Director-General, Corporate Services, Department of Housing and Public Works**

**CHAIR:** Director-General, I invite you to introduce your team and brief the committee after which committee members will have some questions for you.

**Mr Cridland:** Thank you, Chair, committee members and also parliamentary staff here today. I say good morning to any of our fantastic departmental staff who are watching online.

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce you to the Department of Housing and Public Works. I want to take just a moment to introduce my deputy directors-general and assistant director-general in attendance today who will help answer any questions the committee may have. First we have Sarah Amos, who is the Deputy Director-General of Social and Affordable Housing Growth. Sarah will be able to talk about the delivery of our social and affordable housing in this state, including the target of 53,500 homes by 2044. Next we have Matthew Nye, our Deputy Director-General of Corporate Services, who can answer any of the fun questions relating to staffing, finance, digital and risk. I look forward to a lot of questions for you, Matt.

Next is Angela Masson, our Deputy Director-General of Housing and Homelessness Services, who will be able to talk about the management of our social housing tenancies, our homeless response and our housing support products including private rental market products. Next we have Andrew Bennett, our Deputy Director-General of Procurement. Andrew will be able to talk about our Queensland government procurement policies and strategies and also about our commercial business unit, QFleet.

Next we have Kirstine Harvie, who is our Acting Deputy Director-General of Policy, Performance and First Nations, who can talk to you about the department's youth initiatives around housing delivery and service delivery for our First Nations communities and about the department's legislative agenda. Next we have Paul Hyde, sitting right next to me, the Acting Deputy Director-General of Public Works, who can talk about our Public Works division including our major projects and our government builder, QBuild. Paul's day job is the head of QBuild, so he will have plenty of knowledge about that. Next to Paul is Ainslie Barron, who is our Assistant Director-General of Building Policy, who can talk to you about Queensland's building legislation and regulations and the Queensland Development Code.

Whilst not here today, I also want to acknowledge our minister, the Hon. Sam O'Connor MP, Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Youth, and his team led by Chief of Staff Matt Adams. They have provided great support to us as a department and as a leadership team since we formed in early November last year.

I am also conscious that this briefing was postponed due to the extreme weather events in the north and the south-east. I do want to thank the committee for your flexibility and understanding. To give you a sense of the scale of the department's response to those events, I want to share some of our activities during the response and the recovery phases for the two declared disaster events in the north and the south, noting that we are now right in the middle of a third event in the south-west.

For the earlier two events we responded to 610 emergency housing assistance requests. We provided temporary emergency accommodation to 569 people across 306 households. We had 82 Housing staff attend 20 evacuation centres to provide on-the-spot housing support and we had a further 215 Housing staff attend the 60 community recovery hubs and provide support to around 1,200 people. We also had accepted 160 referrals to specialist homelessness services during that time.

I want to touch on QBuild and some of the fantastic work they did. They conducted 1,282 rapid damage assessments on state government assets. They have now completed the majority of rectification works for government assets in the north, with a completion target of 7 April, so everything that was damaged in the north will be finished by 7 April. They are working on over 2,100 government assets in South-East Queensland following TC Alfred and have a target completion of all schools by 22 April to allow students to safely return to school for term 2. All other customers will have their repairs completed by 30 April. That is a tremendous effort in a short period of time. I am happy for Paul and I to talk more about that later.

Our work continues, though. We remain with 77 people across 43 households in temporary emergency accommodation. We will continue to support them until they can return home or transition to stable long-term housing. I want to thank and acknowledge all of the department's staff who were involved in responding to these disasters. They do mighty work when it is most needed to protect some of our most vulnerable Queenslanders.

On that note, all of us here today are incredibly proud of the 4,400-odd dedicated hardworking professional staff in our department. They work across 85 sites across the state including 22 housing service centres, QBuild depots and our rapid accommodation apprenticeship centres in Cairns, Zillmere and Eagle Farm. Most of our staff are frontline or frontline support—so over 70 per cent of staff—including our Housing staff like RentConnect officers, our QBuild tradies and our staff working on modular homes in our rapid accommodation centres.

The department has an annual budget of \$4.917 billion, which is why I brought reinforcements in our Chief Financial Officer, Tanya Brady. It is a rather large budget. Through that budget we have several core responsibilities including: housing policy and intergovernmental relations, social housing growth, housing and homelessness services, youth affairs, the night-life economy, the Queensland Government Accommodation Office and leading whole-of-government procurement, and I will talk more about a couple of those. I will not talk more about the department in that sense. You have more of that in the briefing pack that we provided including all detailed organisational charts et cetera.

Moving onto housing, our department owns a statewide housing portfolio of over 63,000 homes. This number grows every day as we build and acquire more. Of the 63,000 homes that we own, we directly manage 55,700 homes. That makes the department Queensland's largest residential landlord. Like all residential landlords, we manage those tenancies under the same Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act that private tenants come under. As I mentioned before, the Queensland government has a target to deliver 53,500 social and community homes by 2044. That includes 10,000 community homes on charity and church land to be delivered in partnership with community housing providers. It also includes a commitment to deliver eight new youth foyers and 10 new and replaced domestic and family violence shelters.

Last year, in 2023-24, the department delivered 1,379 social and affordable homes, including 722 homes in partnership with community housing providers. Over 50 per cent of the delivery was in partnership with community housing providers, which is a great number. That is up in the last couple of years from around 30 to 35 per cent so there is good growth there. The number of homes we deliver is expected to rise to more than 2,000 homes on average each year from 2028, as our construction pipeline increases and, of course, subject to government budget outcomes. Our capital program for this financial year is \$1.13 billion, which includes approximately \$314.9 million for the construction of new social housing and \$623.9 million in capital grants to deliver social housing through CHPs to commence and continue through to construction and to upgrade social housing in partnership with our registered providers.

In the homelessness space, which Ang leads, we know that increasing rents and record-low rental vacancies are putting pressure on households, with more Queenslanders experiencing or at risk of homelessness. In response, the government has foreshadowed a 20 per cent funding boost for frontline specialist homelessness services over the next four years to help meet that increasing demand.

In First Nations communities, home ownership is a priority for us. In February, the minister announced a home ownership scheme for Palm Island residents that will support the sale of up to 300 social homes to residents in coming years through a rent-to-buy arrangement with the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council. Community engagement and consultation with that scheme will be led by the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council with the support of our department. The council held its first community information session post the announcement of the rent-to-buy scheme on Palm Island on 25 March and I was pleased that four of our departmental representatives could attend, along with 25 community members who expressed interest in home ownership. The minister has also written to all other Indigenous communities offering the same pathways and we will work with any community that expresses an interest.

In terms of public works, our Public Works division includes the Queensland Government builder, QBuild, as I mentioned. The major projects team manages many of the state's most significant infrastructure projects on behalf of customer agencies, the building policy team, headed by Ainslie, and also the Queensland Government Accommodation Office, which provides property solutions for all government agencies. To give you a sense of the scale, the Queensland Government Accommodation Office team manages a building and residential portfolio providing over one million square metres of office accommodation across over 600 buildings and approximately 3,000 government employee residences. It is an enormous portfolio.

In 2024-25, Public Works has a capital program of \$292.4 million, which includes \$162.9 million to deliver safe and secure government employee housing including in remote and regional communities. This is a key initiative that is taking pressure off housing markets in those communities where the rental market is extremely tight. We will see 439 new government employee housing residents delivered by 2027. In 2024 alone the team delivered 208 additional government employee homes, which was a great effort.

The QBuild team has also been hard at work delivering modular social and affordable government employee homes as part of our Modern Methods of Construction project. Our rapid accommodation and apprenticeship centres are investing in the workforce of tomorrow, providing training opportunities to apprentices who are starting their careers. In February, I attended the largest Brisbane

ever single intake of apprentices for QBuild on record, with 54 new apprentices on the one day from all parts of the state, all ages and all experiences. It was incredible. Paul or I would be happy to expand on that as well.

Public Works is also at the forefront of the government's work to lift productivity across the state's construction industry. This includes supporting the government's Building Reg Reno, which will make it easier to build in Queensland by cutting red tape and reducing unnecessary costs. Ainslie would be happy to expand on the initiatives under that later.

In terms of the Office for Youth, which is a new addition to the portfolio under the change of government, plenty of activity is underway. This includes delivering and supporting programs such as the Queensland Youth Parliament, the Queensland Indigenous Youth Leadership Program and the Speak OUT series. These programs amplify the voices of young Queenslanders and empower them to shape policies and drive change while building their leadership capabilities. Nominations are now open for young people to take part in the Queensland Youth Parliament. The Office for Youth also supports Queensland Youth Week, which is coming up from 6 to 12 April. They are already underway on work to coordinate the Safer Schoolies Response, which helps school leavers stay safe during the annual schoolies week celebrations at Surfers Paradise and Airlie Beach in November of this year.

We also have the night-life economy. I understand that the committee was briefed on that by John 'JC' Collins in February. I want to mention a couple of things that have happened since, which the department is supporting. The Night-Life Economy Advisory Panel met for the first time last month. It is bringing together external experts from across the night-life economy sector. It is a forum for the panel to discuss issues and opportunities relating to the sector and advise the commissioner on initiatives to enhance the sector. The panel is meeting for the second time tonight, which is great. We also have the Queensland Government Night-Life Steering Committee, which is the government equivalent, made up of representatives from across different agencies who can adjust those policy levers to effect the change that JC might want for the night-life economy.

Finally, our team leads the whole-of-government procurement response leveraging the Queensland government's buying power to prioritise Queensland businesses and jobs, with around \$26 billion procured by government agencies last year. The largest categories of procurement are, of course, transport and infrastructure services, building and construction, maintenance and general goods and services. Last year the procurement team were able to link 102 Queensland government agencies with 40,000 suppliers through the marketplace under the Queensland procurement solution. Importantly, 83 per cent of all Queensland businesses are registered with the Queensland government for procurement opportunities. Our team have also implemented whole-of-government utilities arrangements such as gas and electricity for small sites, and metering and data services, leading to cost reductions of between 20 per cent and 27 per cent. We are ensuring that procurement practices across government are achieving their desired outcomes and that taxpayers' money is being respected throughout the procurement activities. QFleet, which is also part of our department, provides vehicle leasing and strategic fleet management services for than 11,000 vehicles across the state.

In closing, as you can see, our department has a significant agenda ahead of it delivering for the people of Queensland. As I often say, I have the best group of leaders in government and we are happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Director-General. I really appreciate that. Before I go to the deputy chair for the first question, please accept my appreciation for the work you have done with regard to the responses across the three affected areas, covering a vast expanse of the state.

**Ms BUSH:** I start by echoing that. Mark, I think it is a sign of a really good leader to know how to surround yourself with equally competent people. Well done for bringing your team in today and thank you for all of the work that you do ordinarily but specifically around the three weather events. It is a tremendous amount of work. We look forward to getting to know you better and working with you over this term. Can you advise the total additional funding provided since the change of government and beyond what the former government allocated to deliver social and affordable housing? Is there any additional funding allocated since the change of government?

**Mr Cridland:** I might turn to Sarah in a moment. Obviously, the government's first budget is approaching. We are keenly interested in that, as are most agencies. Treasury would say we are overly interested, of course, but we are putting our best foot forward. I will refer to Sarah in terms of the growth in numbers.

**Ms Amos:** At this stage, we have existing funding programs that support our social and affordable housing delivery program. The QuickStarts Qld program is supporting the commencement of 3,265 social homes by 30 June 2025. We also have the Housing Investment Fund. Those are the two main programs at the moment.

**Ms BUSH:** So there is existing funding only; great, thank you.

**CHAIR:** We have a budget coming up and we have been in power for only four months.

**Mr KEMPTON:** I am probably a recipient of a lot of your services and some of your biggest headaches. I am interested in the level of interaction and how you prioritise housing, especially in remote regions, for frontline workers such as police, nurses and teachers. I am finding at the moment, in my discussions with the police in particular, that part of the manning problem in those remote areas is housing.

**Mr Cridland:** We provide government employee housing for government agencies to use for their employees. We consult with all of the agencies, police included, annually. We ask that every agency provide us with a commissioner or a deputy commissioner, or a CEO or deputy CEO, endorsed request for housing. We then pass that through as the request for housing. We do not moderate it. We do not make an assessment. If the workforce plans of those agencies have determined that that is the housing they need then that is what we deliver.

We have just been out again talking to all of the agencies for the forward program. At the moment, we have around 439 additional homes programmed over a five-year period, costing around \$683 million. We have about 295 of those delivered and the rest are to come. We are confident that we will finish the rest of them by 2027, but we are already planning and engaging with government about our next program based on the latest returns from those agencies. Again, as I said before but it is worth repeating, we put forward exactly what those agencies request; we do not moderate that in any way.

**CHAIR:** Director-General, do you have a budget that you are responsive to or once they make that request do you then have to fight for that budget?

**Mr Cridland:** Every dollar is a fight in a budget. I do not think that ever changes. Certainly for government employee housing, what we put forward is the cost for the demand as indicated to us from the agencies. The current program, which is 2022-23 through to 2026-27, sets \$683 million for 439 homes, which was the demand. We are building. I cannot go into it, obviously, because it is subject to budget consideration, but we have built a forward program that reflects the ask from each agency and we will prosecute that through the budget process.

**CHAIR:** I thought that was the case, thank you.

**Mr MELLISH:** How many projects is the department considering for contract under the Housing Investment Fund and how many of those projects are for the purchase of existing stock?

**Mr Cridland:** Under the HIF, as it stands, there have been 772 homes delivered—18 of those are newly constructed—and we have about 1,776 homes under the HIF under construction now. To get to your question, member, the government's policy is that we do not use the HIF to acquire existing properties; it is all new build from this point forward. The pipeline is fairly committed now anyway for the funding that is available under the HIF.

**Mr MELLISH:** Is that a change in policy in terms of not purchasing existing stock? If so, were any that were under consideration for contract scrapped because of the change of policy?

**Mr Cridland:** I will answer your second part first: no. The answer to the first part is: yes, it is a change of policy that we direct the Housing Investment Fund to new supply only.

**Mr JAMES:** Mark, you certainly have a big job ahead of you. You mentioned that you are doing a lot more work in modular housing. Could you elaborate on that? How is it going? Do you find it effective in terms of costs and supply?

**Mr Cridland:** I will throw this one to Paul, who leads QBuild, which is doing both of our builds through our rapid accommodation centres and also engaging with the market for our MMC 600 program, which is about acquiring 600 MMCs from the market, and they are in all various phases. I think there are three tranches that Paul can talk through.

**Mr Hyde:** Yes, the answer to that is that we are getting better. It is a program where we have 11 suppliers at the moment external from QBuild. We have our three factories—Zillmere, Eagle Farm and Cairns—where we do our apprentice training and so forth. We build around 30 a year out of the

Brisbane factories and we build around 26 a year out of Cairns. We have gone out for an extension to those 11 suppliers and we are currently finalising seven additional. In terms of the tranches for the MMC 600, there are 127 that will be completed by June of this year. We are in progress for 250 underway and another 250 in finalising tender, which will be at the end of April. In terms of the program, it is going well but there is lots more to do.

**Mr Cridland:** This product is quite exceptional. They were developed in a co-design spread between industry and the state Government Architect. When people think typically about an MMC product, their mind does not turn to what this product is. I will not name the council, but I will give you an example. A councillor said, 'There's no way we're going to have that product in our community.' We invited them down to see it and they ordered 10 on the spot. If you get to see them, they are a fantastic product. They are specifically designed for the environment they will be in. They meet all of the codes, National Construction Code 2022. They are a magic product. I recently visited some in Cairns, in fact, and they have expanded that operation so much that they have had to build a temporary shelter out the back of the shed already and they have the storage yard full of modules ready to be shipped to various communities. They are well worth having a look at. They go to government employee housing, to social housing and to our remote communities. They are a terrific product.

**Mr MELLISH:** Have any projects been removed or not proceeded with in the Queensland bid in the Housing Australia Future Fund since the change of government?

**CHAIR:** I thought the director-general answered that in answer to the last question with regard to the change of policy and no extra Housing Investment Fund.

**Mr MELLISH:** It is a different fund.

**Mr Cridland:** You are asking about the Housing Australia Future Fund projects that have been removed? Is that the question?

**Mr MELLISH:** If any have been removed or not proceeded with.

**Mr Cridland:** I do not believe so but I will defer to Sarah on this.

**Ms Amos:** We have submitted proposals to the Housing Australia Future Fund as part of a Team Queensland bid, and that went through as part of round 1. We have two projects that were successful for support through that process. Details of those will be forthcoming in due course, once they are all finalised. For the second round of the Housing Australia Future Fund we have submitted, again, a series of projects and we are working with the Commonwealth to resolve the final arrangements for that bid.

**CHAIR:** One of the exciting things that I know the new government is exploring is housing in Indigenous communities. I have been fortunate to visit a number of the discrete communities, including Palm Island. In your opening address you mentioned the scheme on Palm Island and the 300 houses. I am interested in particular in that process and the learnings that could happen from that. It might not be for every Indigenous community, but I would like to understand some more of the work in that space.

**Mr Cridland:** Thank you, Chair. I will ask Kirstine to answer this in a moment, but I want to come back to an earlier question I had about any new funding. I would interpret that as capital. We have received some extra funding over the forward estimates for operations for the 20 per cent uplift for specialist homeless services, so I should clarify that. I heard the question differently. Apologies.

**Ms Harvie:** We are working with councils, trustees and communities on their unique home ownership models. Each community is unique and is unique in its aspirations, so solutions have to be unique for those communities. To come to your point, we think there are learnings from the Palm Island model that could be applied to other communities. The department has been meeting with communities widely across the state. The director-general mentioned in his opening remarks there was a community consultation forum on Palm Island. Twenty-five people attended, as well as the department. The department is working with the council currently on all of those operational policies to bring the scheme to life. Yes, we do think there are learnings. The minister has written to all communities offering for communities to collaborate with the department on the home ownership option that would be right for them.

**CHAIR:** The thing for me is the capital investment the family would achieve with that. Have you done any modelling on what that looks like for the future generations?

**Ms Harvie:** Yes. With the Palm Island scheme, for example, a tenant will pay a social housing rent. It is a rent-to-buy scheme. They will pay a rent-to-buy contribution and then, ultimately, when the home is transferred to them, they will have ownership obligations. That is something we have to

bear in mind as we are working through this scheme, because it is very different being a home owner to being a renter. There are obligations associated with that, along with the benefit of having that capital asset.

**CHAIR:** Which can then be passed on.

**Ms Harvie:** Which can be passed on to future generations.

**Mr Cridland:** That is a great answer. Thanks, Chair. It is a really interesting thing, because on Palm Island I think there is one private ownership home, for example, so there is no market, per se, despite it being in a beautiful part of the world and literally kilometres from resorts that charge \$20,000 a night. There is no housing market, per se, on Palm, so we are creating a market, in a sense. The starting point is assigning what we think is a reasonable value to those homes—that will depend on the type of home, its age and location et cetera—to establish a price guide for that. As Kirstine mentioned, people will pay the equivalent of a social housing rent into council's trust that will ultimately pay off that home and give them a 99-year lease of ownership which then becomes a tradable commodity.

**Ms Harvie:** I just wanted to add some figures around the progress that has been made in home ownership outcomes in remote communities. There are 215 families in remote communities that have achieved home ownership, most through resolution of the Land Holding Act leases and six through purchase of a social housing dwelling under a 99-year home ownership lease which the director-general was just talking about.

**Mr KING:** Thank you all for coming in. I know that you have been very busy and will continue to be, but that is good. Director-General, can you advise if any positions, either temporary or permanent, have ceased or not been renewed for appointment by the department or government?

**Mr Cridland:** I might give an introduction and then hand over to the deputy director-general of corporate. We are a large organisation, as I mentioned—nearly 4½ thousand people. By nature of the services we deliver, we do have some elements of our workforce that are temporary in nature. If we are engaged by an agency to deliver a major project, we will engage temporary, time limited resources for specific tasks. There are times when those temporary labour hire arrangements naturally end, when a project ends. That is happening as a normal part of business. In terms of our full-time-equivalent employees, I am not aware of any of that nature at all, but I will throw to the deputy director-general of Corporate.

**Mr Nye:** We have not had any forced or voluntary redundancies in the last financial year. Our workforce does fluctuate significantly, as the director-general indicated, based on demand. Particularly in our QBuild and our housing service centres, we have temporary contracts. We have a reasonable sized temporary workforce. It is often how we use our workforce to onboard staff. It is very difficult to find staff and in some of our areas our turnover is probably a little bit higher than we would like it, based on the nature of work that they are undertaking, and so therefore we use temporary staff or contractors to come in as an entry level and do it that way. A large proportion of our staff is actually a permanent workforce: 92 per cent are full-time—86 per cent are permanent—and 72 per cent of those staff are actually delivering frontline services. We do not have the data on exactly the movement because it will change. If I give it to you now—and I do not have it—it would change by the time I leave this room. It fluctuates every day.

**Mr KING:** I understand the peaks and troughs, coming from a government owned corporation myself.

**Mr KEMPTON:** In relation to modular housing, I am interested in how this actually works. A decade ago in Napranum the department allowed the community to build about 10 of its own homes with MiHaven. I inspected those homes recently and they are still in very good condition. The problem with the modular housing—or its less flattering term, flat packs—is: are they, in fact, fit for purpose? Do they have adequate response to the requirements of each community—and there are a number of those for a number of reasons? Do they maximise the opportunity for Indigenous employment? Then you have other considerations around cost effectiveness and so on. I can understand the trade, but I am not confident it is the perfect outcome.

**Mr Cridland:** Obviously, the type of homes built in each of the remote communities is guided by those communities, as to whether they wish to do a stick build onsite or whether they are happy with an MMC product. We are entirely guided by them around that. Having seen these products and seen the latest batch up in Cairns—they are in all sorts of stages; you get to see the framing, the insulation and all the rest of it—I can assure you that they are purpose-built for the communities they are going to and the weather rating they need. They specifically pay attention to whether they are in



corrosive environments and the heat of that environment. Paul will give you a more technical answer than I am giving, but I want to assure you that they are all designed specifically for the community's needs.

**Mr Hyde:** The majority of these buildings are volumetric; they are not a flat pack. We truck them in as a volume. They are fit for purpose. They are built for the conditions. There are modifications being done to the design continually to make sure we are meeting the fit-for-purpose livable conditions, but they are certainly compliant with every part of the requirements. We have a design for the Torres Strait Islands which actually gives full through ventilation for the home and an outdoor type kitchen which allows the tenant more versatility in their cooking and cooling for the home. To the question, yes, they are fit for purpose, member.

**Mr KEMPTON:** I would like an opportunity to visit that factory at some stage. I would really enjoy that.

**Mr Cridland:** We would definitely welcome any of the committee who wanted to visit. That is the key to it. Once people see this product, they recognise that it is very different from what conceptually they have in their mind.

**CHAIR:** We will put it on our ever-growing list of places to visit.

**Mr KING:** I am looking forward to that visit, too. Has the department provided the minister with a copy of the recommendations of the homelessness review?

**Mr Cridland:** The independent reviewer provided the minister with a copy of the report and we received a copy from the minister. That report, I believe, was received just before the new year. It contains a number of significant recommendations. I think the minister has addressed this publicly. We are actively considering those recommendations and consulting with government on the response.

**Mr JAMES:** Mark, you mentioned red-tape reduction in your opening comments. Can you elaborate on that a little—where you see you could cut some red tape?

**Mr Cridland:** I will throw to Ainslie, who is an absolute expert on this. There are a number of tranches that we are pursuing to make it easier to build in Queensland. We have all seen, from the national Productivity Commission report, the national homelessness centre and the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council, all the challenges around productivity for the construction sector and the lack of information. Anything we can do, from a government side, to improve that we are engaging in policy discussions with the government on. We also look forward to supporting the Queensland Productivity Commission, which will be very valuable in this space. In the meantime, while the Productivity Commission is forming and doing its work, there are some quick wins we have been able to achieve. With that, I will throw to Ainslie.

**Ms Barron:** We are looking to support the government in its endeavours to reduce red tape in relation to a number of matters for the building industry, and that is some work that will precede the work of the Productivity Commission, when it is established, with its regulatory review of the building industry. It is rolling out in four tranches, as we are describing them. The first tranche, which occurred at the start of the year, relates to the pause in the ongoing rollout of the project trust account arrangement laws. Then, as part of the second tranche, there were a number of regulation amendments, the key of which was to no longer require annual financial reporting to be provided to the QBCC for the state's smallest building contractors.

As part of some further work, we are looking to support the government in terms of legislative amendments. We are working through some processes around supporting digital licensing for the Queensland Building and Construction Commission so that, in the same way you can have a digital licence for your driver's licence, the licence that the QBCC issues will soon-ish be able to be digital, but some of the law needs to be changed in order to support that. Then a little later in the year we will also be looking to undertake some consultation in relation to more contemporary regulatory environments. For example, insurance and licensing thresholds have not changed for 20 years. Inflation, of course, means that \$3,300 now is not what \$3,300 was 20 years ago. We are looking to ensure that some timeframes around renewal of licences are consistent across the various pieces of building related legislation. There are a number of matters we are looking to support—productivity improvements and ease of doing business for the industry.

**Mr JAMES:** Further to that, did you find the latest changes to the National Construction Code a challenge? I understand that Queensland is the only state in Australia that took on all of these changes in full; is that correct?

**Ms Barron:** To address the last part of your question first, that is not the situation. All jurisdictions have adopted NCC 2022. There were a number of changes to the residential construction standard. The NCC covers residential construction and other forms of construction, so anything from multistorey residential towers through to warehouses, factories, laboratories, car parks et cetera. There are the modern home standards, which I am presuming is the part of your question you are referring to, which relates to livability, select accessibility standards and updated energy efficiency standards. Most jurisdictions have adopted the modern homes standards in some form at this point. There was a period of time when jurisdictions were going through a process of implementation, but at this stage Western Australia has not adopted NCC 2022, and New South Wales varies out a part. Aside from that, all other jurisdictions have taken those on board.

In terms of the other part of your question around issues and challenges related to that, we have been working with industry and the community more broadly on the changes that came into effect in 2023 from about 2017. As part of that ongoing process, we have both refined the technical content of the National Construction Code. We introduced the Queensland Development Code to support some further changes to make matters fit for purpose for Queensland, and we have also been engaging with a range of stakeholders—builders, the associations and the people and advocates in these areas—in order to work through particular matters. There are some issues in terms of elevated forms of construction, particularly as it relates to accessibility. There are some discussions around how you go about achieving particularly the energy efficiency standards when you are looking at renovating homes. We are about to undertake some targeted stakeholder consultation in relation to that.

**Ms BUSH:** Thanks, everyone, for answering your questions so earnestly. We are getting there. Obviously the provision of crisis and emergency accommodation is something that I think most Queenslanders really care about. Are you able to advise if there have been any changes to policies or guidelines in relation to the provision of crisis and emergency accommodation, either for the department or for specialist homelessness services?

**Mr Cridland:** I will throw to Angela in a moment, but I will start by saying this is such an important tool for us in terms of responding to those who are experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping. Having access to programs like the Immediate Housing Response, which allows us to fund hotels and motels, means we have been able to provide—and it is a staggering figure—724,909 nights' accommodation to households since July 2023 up to January this year. Currently we have 4,572 people across 2,140 households in temporary emergency accommodation, all from very difficult circumstances. A lot are escaping domestic and family violence. They are supported by us as a department, and they are supported by our funded specialist homelessness services on a close to equal proportion—not quite equal, but close to. That does not come without a significant budgetary impact. Like most jurisdictions that run a similar crisis accommodation program, we have operational policies around that which require people to engage with us on planning pathways out of those motels into longer term, stable accommodation. They require a co-contribution, like happens with social housing, where you have to pay up to 25 per cent of your assessable income. They require them to not damage the hotel and motel, which is a good thing. All of those things we have looked at and consulted with the sector on, but without stealing anything more from Angela, I will hand over to her to finish off on that, thank you.

**CHAIR:** You are well briefed.

**Ms Masson:** I think the director-general has given us a really good summary in relation to the IHR program that we do. The program is also running through our housing service centres, which is called—the refuge accommodation and assistance package. This is where we have made those changes, as the director-general has explained, of how we confirm that people within this accommodation are in fact our most vulnerable and those who really do need that support. Across the 2024-25 financial year, we have 46 NGOs that are being funded to deliver 63 different specialist homelessness services through the housing rapid response program. As the director-general has mentioned, the numbers are staggering in relation to the people we are supporting.

The demand has continued to exceed our anticipation and, with that, we have put guidelines around how to manage the intake of those. It is important that our specialist homelessness services, our providers who have that experience for the future pathway planning, its important they are the front door for our most vulnerable, but we do have our housing service centres that are there when that capacity is not available so that no Queenslanders in need who meets our criteria for these particular services will not be provided with that particular accommodation and will not see themselves there.

Through this process as well, the eligibility criteria do, as the director-general mentioned, strengthen the co-contribution piece. This is an important piece that we have seen through our specialist homelessness services in conversation, because this co-contribution can then be deemed as a statement of rental tenancy readiness. We are starting to see people have that evidence base to be able to move into private market or continued housing or headleasing elements, with that demonstration of evidence sitting behind them that they are rent-ready or that they are able to take on those tenancies—and also in relation to the premises themselves, making sure they are taking care of those premises as a residence and actually working with us for their future pathway planning which does go into those elements of private market support and/or the social housing system.

**Ms BUSH:** Thank you, Angela, for that really comprehensive response. I am interested in the specificity of those changes. It is probably too much for you to tell us today. Could you either table those or take that as a question on notice to provide to the committee those changes in the policies and guidelines you have just outlined?

**Ms Masson:** Certainly. Those particular guidelines are actually published on our departmental website, so they are available for access, but we can certainly provide that through the committee process.

**Ms BUSH:** That will be great, thank you.

**CHAIR:** Director-General, in your opening address you mentioned the apprentices. I am particularly interested in the QBuild apprentices, the regional approach and the benefits across the state.

**Mr Cridland:** One of the great days at the start of this year, amongst all of the disasters, was to go to meet, along with the minister, our 54 apprentices all over the state and hear about what they are doing. They have all been kitted out in their PPE and have been inducted. It was the first time I ever noticed that painters get different PPE to chippies or plumbers. The painters have their white outfits which, in some ways, does not make sense to me, but that is what they have. It was fantastic. In total, QBuild has 168 apprentices on board, with that 54 from February being the largest single induction. I do have some data about what fields they are going to. The largest intake is carpentry. Electrical is next. Plumbing and painting were equal—around nine each of those. The fridges are five—they are tough to get. There is one stonemason. I have seen some of the stonemasonry kit that QBuild has and they are going to have a great time. The regional breakdown is: Central Queensland, five; Far North Queensland, 10; North Queensland, nine; South-East Queensland, 23; South-West Queensland, two; and Wide Bay-Burnett, five. That is the regional spread, which is pretty good.

**CHAIR:** Talking about a regional spread, can you tell us about QBuild's approach with regard to the disasters, just to give the committee some sense of that?

**Mr Cridland:** Disasters, yes, noting we are currently in one. It was a fantastic response. I will never forget a great video I saw one morning of the QBuild depot in Townsville with the fleet rolling out, heading off to support Ingham. It went for a long time. I did not realise they stored that many vehicles in our depot. It was a great sign of how much effort went into assisting recovery.

To give you some additional data to my opening statement, in North Queensland we had more than 90 QBuild staff from across the state on the ground. They were also supported by 130 QBuild engaged contractors. They were working on schools, homes and other government buildings across Ingham and Townsville. I was fortunate enough to visit the war room that they had in Townsville. It was a really impressive operation in terms of how they were handling the logistics of responding to the disaster and the multiple meetings a day checking in on their progress.

As I said, because of all of that effort, they hope to have all of the rectification works on over 600 assets done in the north by 7 April. Most of them are done now. The ones that are left are where there is a long lead time—where they are waiting for parts and things like that. It was a terrific effort. For TC Alfred we had more than 190 QBuild staff who have completed all the damage assessments now and are now repairing the essential community infrastructure, including schools. That is 2,100 government assets that have to have work done on them. That is an enormous task. Our team are telling me they are confident that they will get the schools open in time for term 2—that is terrific—and all the rest of the government assets by 30 April, which is quite an incredible response. The team should be very proud of the work they did. Paul, do you want to add anything? It is your crew.

**Mr Hyde:** The director-general has covered it nicely. The really important thing was that we were very visible in the community, and the community was very appreciative of our efforts across the community. It was excellent.

**CHAIR:** That is great.

**Mr MELLISH:** How is the recruitment process for the QBCC going? It has been going for a bit. Are we far off having a new commissioner appointed?

**Mr Cridland:** I am on the panel for that appointment. It is in the process, noting that it is with Governor in Council. I do not want to say too much, but I feel that the panel has done its work. We look forward to the Governor in Council's consideration of that in the near future.

**Mr KEMPTON:** In your submission under 'Strategic challenges', dot point 3 under 'Social housing supply' talks about the lack of land available and so on. It is probably a bit of an understatement. You could write a submission about that alone. Just by way of observation, in communities there are allotments within town that are Katter leases, where people have disappeared or died and the council is unable to utilise those blocks. No doubt you are aware of that and working on it. In other communities, tenants have either moved away or passed away and, for social and sorry business reasons, those houses remain unoccupied for an inordinate amount of time. Maybe we need to try to develop some protocols around that.

I am particularly interested in the fact that home ownership underpins social reform and economic development. We put through a bill in 2014 which I did most of the consultation for as the assistant minister at the time—the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land (Providing Freehold) and Other Legislation Amendment Act. You are well aware of it. I am just wondering whether that was offered as an option to the Palm Island people because it is freehold. Every other person in Queensland who owns their own home is freehold. If it was not offered, why not?

**Mr Cridland:** I might start and then pass to Kirstine. My recollection of this is that that freeholding process is available to each community. It is a process that is run through the department of natural resources, where land management is, not through our department. I do not want to get too far into it because it is not my knowledge area. My understanding is that it is open and available at all times for communities to apply for. Kirstine, is there anything you want to add?

**Ms Harvie:** Only to say that, yes, all options for home ownership are on the table. I cannot definitively say whether that option was offered to the Palm Island community, except to say that the rent-to-buy scheme was the proposal from the Palm Island Council for the home ownership option that would work for them.

**CHAIR:** In speaking to the Premier, I know that was the starting point of those conversations, to make sure that home ownership was achieved for our Indigenous communities. Deputy Chair, did you have any questions that we might ask the director-general on notice, bearing in mind the time?

**Ms BUSH:** Yes, we are out of time. We have a couple of extra questions. I do not know whether it is easier if I put them through you, Chair, and the secretariat and we write to them for a response or whether you want me to list them now.

**CHAIR:** I think it is appropriate to mention them now.

**Ms BUSH:** First, the minister announced a fast-track of the QBCC's move to digital platforms—I think this is going to be one for you, Andrew—to cut paperwork and to make it easier to manage licences. How much funding has been allocated towards this IT project? Given that it has been fast-tracked, when is it expected to go live?

Second, both the Queensland Procurement Strategy 2023 and the Queensland Procurement Policy 2023 had strong Buy Queensland principles and targets. Can you please confirm that the local benefits test and a target of 30 per cent of the state's procurement spend by value from Queensland small and medium enterprises is still in force?

Third, has the department been asked to prepare briefing information for government on winding back energy efficiency and/or accessibility codes? They are the three questions.

On the other question on notice around the changes in eligibility for crisis and emergency accommodation, without putting too fine a point on it, probably what I am not after is a list of the current policies, because I do not know what was before that. What I want is something that specifies the changes in those in those policies, if that is okay.

**CHAIR:** Thanks. We have that question on notice anyway. That concludes this briefing and these proceedings. Thank you all for the information you have provided today. There are a few questions on notice. If we could have a response by 11 April, that would be really great. Thank you to our Hansard reporters and broadcast staff. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. I declare this public briefing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 11.06 am.**