



STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND WORKS COMMITTEE

Members present:

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

Staff present:

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

PUBLIC PORTFOLIO BRIEFING—DEPARTMENT OF STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 5 February 2025

Brisbane

WEDNESDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2025

The committee met at 10.17 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open this public briefing. My name is Jim McDonald, 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 Shane King, member for Kurwongbah; Mr Bart Mellish, member for Aspley; and Mr David Kempton, member for Cook, who will be joining us via videoconference.

Today we will be receiving briefings from departmental officers on the portfolio areas falling within the committee's areas of responsibility. The purpose of these briefings is to assist the committee with furthering its understanding of the respective portfolio areas and key initiatives going on in these areas. At the outset, I would like to thank the directors-general for making themselves and their leadership teams available today. Today, we will receive briefings from the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, the Department of Transport and Main Roads, and the Department of Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games.

This 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. 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 off your mobile phones or put them on silent mode. Finally, I remind everyone to press the microphones on before speaking and off when finished. I also ask you to say your name when you start your address or answer questions.

BAUER, Ms Michele, Deputy Director-General, State Development, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

COGGAN, Mr Gerard, Coordinator-General, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

FERRIS, Mr Shaun, Assistant Coordinator-General, Industry and Infrastructure Development, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

HARWOOD, Ms Peta, State Planner and Deputy Director-General, Planning, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

HEELAN, Ms Donna, Acting Deputy Director-General, Office of Industrial Relations, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

KELLY, Ms Leah, Deputy Director-General, Infrastructure and Regional Strategy, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

McKEE, Mr Michael, Deputy Director-General, Corporate, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

SMELTZER, Ms Kerry, Assistant Coordinator-General, New Economy and Transition Coordination, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

SOSSO, Mr John, Director-General, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

WILDE, Ms Natalie, Deputy Director-General, Strategy, Insights and Advisory, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

CHAIR: Mr Sosso, thank you for coming and welcome to you and your team. I invite you to address the committee.

Mr Sosso: Thank you, Chair. My name is John Sosso, Director-General of the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. I have a short statement. I will not take up too much time of the committee. When I conclude, I will turn to my colleague the Coordinator-General, Mr Gerard Coggan, who also has a short statement.

I thank the committee for the opportunity to provide an overview of the department's strategic objectives, key service areas, programs and initiatives. Chair, we supplied to you and your colleagues a written briefing dated 30 January 2025. I do not intend to waste the time of the committee by going through that. I presume you have it, so thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Mr Sosso: I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to the committee the deputy directors-general leading the department's service delivery: Natalie Wilde, deputy director-general, strategy, insights and advisory; Michele Bauer, deputy director-general, state development; Leah Kelly, deputy director-general, infrastructure and regional strategy—putting it in simple terms, one of Leah's main responsibilities in the infrastructure component is the Olympic and Paralympic Games so Leah is the expert in that area; Donna Heelan, acting director-general, Office of Industrial Relations; and Michael McKee, deputy director-general, corporate. Michael is responsible for corporate services, HR, budget et cetera, and he is also responsible for the Housing Investment Fund, so any questions on that particular fund would go primarily to Michael.

Finally, we have Peta Harwood who has just been appointed State Planner and deputy director-general, planning group. I will make this short introduction about Peta as she has just been appointed. Peta was appointed last week. She has previously held senior executive roles in both the Queensland government and the Brisbane City Council. Peta has already demonstrated her effectiveness, having helped with the work to unlock church and charity owned land for the community housing sector and making wind farms impact assessable like other resource projects.

The Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning was formed in November 2024 following machinery of government changes resulting from the 2024 state election. The machinery of government changes transferred the state's planning group from the former department of housing, local government, planning and public works to the new Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. The department contributes to the Queensland government's commitments to the community by securing responsible economic development, safe workplaces and liveable communities. These commitments are underpinned by a diverse range of responsibilities and functions, including state development, economic development, major project impact assessment, strategic planning for priority industry sectors, capital works and program monitoring, urban growth, industrial relations and last but certainly not least the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games infrastructure. This department is responsible for the infrastructure component; the other department is responsible for the actual games component. Questions concerning Olympic and Paralympic Games infrastructure come to us; broader questions about the games go to the other department.

As further illustration of the diversity and breadth of responsibilities, the department administers 33 statutes in total—30 solely by the department and three jointly with other government agencies. This total does not include legislation administered by my colleague, the Coordinator-General. As at January 2025, the department has a total of 1,813 full-time employees, with 988 working in the Office of Industrial Relations, illustrating the breadth of industrial relations operations across Queensland. Of these 1,813 FTEs, approximately 1,260 operate from Brisbane and 554 are located in departmental regional offices, noting that the department has regional offices for state development, planning and industrial relations.

The department has seven service areas: state development; infrastructure and regional strategy; planning; strategy insights and advisory; industrial relations; corporate; and the Office of the Coordinator-General. In addition, the department services three statutory bodies: Economic Development Queensland, the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority and South Bank Corporation. In terms of capital works, the department is responsible for delivering a range of grant programs with a total value across the program of \$3 billion.

Turning to key portfolio deliverables, the department is strongly focused on driving opportunities to activate the increased supply of housing. In addition to the \$3 billion of grant programs currently budgeted, the department is also responsible for implementing the new \$2 billion Housing Investment Fund, focusing on funding enabling infrastructure to unlock new housing developments from July 2025. It is a fund not on houses as such, rather the infrastructure needed for the building of homes. As I said, my colleague Michael McKee is responsible for that fund.

In relation to the department's planning and infrastructure responsibilities, the department is developing new or revised regional plans for every region in Queensland in conjunction with infrastructure plans that protect the lifestyle of Queensland communities and appropriately cater for growth. Consistent with outcomes of the 100-day review, the department will continue to oversee 2032 games infrastructure, planning and delivery to ensure appropriate planning is underway to deliver the Olympic and Paralympic Games and legacy benefits from the government's significant investment.

In terms of our state's development responsibilities, the department is committed to exploring opportunities for new industries to further economic growth, with a particular focus on Queensland's defence industry. The department through the Office of Industrial Relations is also focused on ensuring workers have adequate protections and fair conditions in their employment.

I am pleased to take this opportunity to outline some key achievements delivered by the department to date and I will be relatively short. These include establishing the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority, commencing a 100-day review and encouraging public submissions that focus on planning and delivering infrastructure, transport and legacy projects related to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Premier announced on 29 November 2024 the appointment of board members to the authority and confirmed the start of the 100-day review.

We have established the Queensland Ministerial Housing Taskforce cabinet committee, chaired by the Deputy Premier. This committee is focused on scaling up supply of housing stock across Queensland to meet the demand for our growing population. We are supporting implementation of the commitment to require wind farm projects to be impact assessable and subject to approval processes consistent with other land uses, such as mining and agriculture. In December 2024, the department introduced changes to the planning framework to unlock church and charity owned land for the community housing sector. This included clarifying the role of ministerial infrastructure designations in the delivery of social and affordable housing and removing barriers to delivery of social and affordable housing on community facilities zoned land. The department's planning group continues to work with local governments to support this initiative by jointly preparing a model code for social and affordable housing on church and charity owned land. In the arena of industrial relations, amendments were passed in December 2024 that reinstate the 24-hour notice period for entry permit holders to de-escalate tensions arising in managing right-of-entry matters.

Looking to the year ahead, the department will focus on key commitments, including working collaboratively with relevant agencies and authorities to scale up supply of housing stock across Queensland, building a respectful partnership with local governments to reset their relationship with us, and continuing to explore opportunities for new industries across Queensland to strengthen our economic growth.

That concludes my opening statement, Mr Chair. Can I say that my department looks forward to working collaboratively with the committee. I hope that we have over the next period of time a close and constructive working relationship because when parliamentary committees such as these work collaboratively with executive agencies such as this department we can produce a lot for the people of Queensland so we look forward to working with you all.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. I appreciate that. Congratulations on your appointment and the other appointments in the fresh start for Queensland. Coordinator-General, would you like to make an opening remark?

Mr Coggan: Thank you. My name is Gerrard Coggan, Coordinator-General. I would like to start by acknowledging the Director-General of the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, John Sosso. I thank the committee for the opportunity this morning to provide an overview of the Office of the Coordinator-General—our strategic objectives, our key service areas, programs and initiatives. Initially, I would like to introduce to the committee the assistant coordinators-general who lead the key functions service areas within the Office of the Coordinator-General: Kerry Smeltzer looks after our new economy and transition coordination group, and Shaun Ferris looks after our industry and infrastructure development group.

As Coordinator-General, I am an independent statutory appointment, reporting to the Deputy Premier in his role as Minister for State Development, with the resourcing in my office and corporate services being provided by the department. I am supported by two assistant coordinator-generals and a team of 115 full-time-equivalent staff. The Office of the Coordinator-General delivers significant economic development outcomes via planning, delivery and coordination of large-scale infrastructure and economic development projects whilst ensuring economic, social and environmental considerations are properly managed. I am responsible for the administration of 15 acts in total, 14 solely by the Coordinator-General and one jointly with other government agencies.

The role of the Coordinator-General was established in 1938 with the State Development Public Works Organisation Act, originally established to provide an orderly, planned system of public works and construction utilities by means of marshalling and coordinated organisation and control thereof. The role of the coordination of major government projects with the cooperation of other departments, local authorities and private agencies has continued throughout the office's existence. With a long history of supporting economic delivery across the state, the Office of the Coordinator-General is recognised as a key delivery partner for government that works to enable, innovate and collaborate across government, industry and a wide range of stakeholders to drive outcomes for Queensland.

Under the State Development Public Works Organisation Act, the Coordinator-General holds significant powers to plan and deliver large-scale projects, whilst the Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Act ensures that residents of communities with large resource projects benefit from the construction and operation of these projects.

Projects declared coordinated projects under the State Development Public Works Organisation Act undergo a rigorous impact assessment process which delivers a timely, yet comprehensive whole-of-government evaluation of the impacts on the economic, social and natural environments, addressing both state and Commonwealth requirements. Assessments of coordinated projects are able to be conducted under a bilateral agreement with the Australian government which allows assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act for matters of national environmental significance. What this means is that we can assess projects on Commonwealth-state matters concurrently, which reduces duplication, promotes collaboration and gains significant time efficiencies for projects.

The Coordinator-General is currently evaluating 19 coordinated projects that have a total estimated value of \$43.2 billion and the potential to create over 8,000 construction jobs and 4,600 operational jobs. These projects are in various industry sectors, including water storage, infrastructure, ports, mining and renewable energy, and are mostly located across regional Queensland. Further powers are also available to facilitate the delivery of private and public infrastructure projects through prescribed project declarations, which allow me to accelerate project delivery timeframes through timely decision-making.

In 2024, the Office of the Coordinator-General partnered with the former department of energy and climate, now Queensland Treasury, and Powerlink to understand the cumulative impacts of renewable energy development in the Callide and Central Queensland regions. The purpose of this work was to understand the potential cumulative impacts of both electricity transmission and renewable energy development on the community and local governments, and inform government planning. The assessment informed a range of initiatives that are currently being coordinated through the Office of the Coordinator-General and delivered in partnership with Banana Shire Council to both mitigate impacts and deliver local legacy benefits.

The Office of the Coordinator-General is also working closely with Critical Minerals Queensland within the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development to facilitate investigations for critical minerals zones and to streamline and expedite projects through the approval pathways. This includes investigating options for environmental and social baselining in the Julia Creek-Richmond critical minerals zone, strategic offset opportunities and water demand and supply options. Following a direction from the Coordinator-General in 2024, Sunwater completed a strategic assessment to address access to sufficient and reliable water for the Julia Creek-Richmond critical minerals zone which identified groundwater as an alternative to other capital-heavy options.

To support the role critical minerals is playing in diversifying our economy, the Office of the Coordinator-General is currently facilitating six prescribed projects and four coordinated projects under the State Development Public Works Organisation Act. These include copper, silica and vanadium mines as well as polysilicon manufacturing. There are currently 12 state development areas across Queensland, covering an area of approximately 195,000 hectares which are strategic areas

of land established by the Coordinator-General to provide land for significant industrial projects to facilitate economic development, enable industrial hubs adjacent key ports and transport networks, and establish multi-user infrastructure corridors. Historically, SDAs have also been used to establish major public works such as the Queensland Children's Hospital.

The Office of the Coordinator-General has been instrumental in advancing growth of emergency industry sectors within state development areas, notably Gladstone and Abbot Point, and more recently unlocking potentially significant bio-industrial opportunities with the Mackay State Development Area, which was declared in February 2024. The Office of the Coordinator-General also has a broader role in coordinating the industrial land strategy for Queensland and facilitating immediate and long-term regional industrial land supply and development by activating fit-for-purpose serviced industrial land for hard-to-locate industry in Queensland. The activation of the Cleveland Bay Industrial Park in the Townsville State Development Area has provided serviced land for over \$150 million worth of industrial investment. Further activation strategies are currently being prepared for Bromelton, Gladstone and Mackay state development areas. Within state development areas, the Coordinator-General is responsible for land use, infrastructure, economic and environmental planning in partnership with local governments. The Coordinator-General also holds significant land interests, totalling approximately 16,293 hectares in six state development areas, to stimulate and facilitate economic growth.

The Coordinator-General has a range of mechanisms under the State Development Public Works Organisation Act to develop, coordinate and deliver major government infrastructure projects. My office regularly works with other departments or government owned corporations to support delivery of the state's capital program. An example of this is through the use of works regulations which authorise works to be carried out and may enliven various powers in relation to land and exemptions from certain approvals. My office is currently working with Seqwater to facilitate the construction of the Toowoomba to Warwick water pipeline project, Queensland Hydro to facilitate investigations into the Borumba Pumped Hydro energy storage project and Powerlink to facilitate the construction of workers' accommodation villages to support the development of the CopperString 2032 project, to name a few.

In addition to the significant role in the facilitation and coordination of capital delivery projects, the Office of the Coordinator-General is responsible for the Queensland Resources Common User Facility project in the Townsville State Development Area. The facility will support the development, extraction and production of Queensland's emerging critical minerals industry.

The powers available under the State Development Public Works Organisation Act and the relationships developed with local governments, state agencies and the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water provide a strong platform for the Office of the Coordinator-General to contribute to the timely and efficient delivery of infrastructure. Leveraging the Office of the Coordinator-General's experience, there is an opportunity to accelerate these approvals through improved coordination, early issue resolution and better alignment of state and Commonwealth expectations.

The Office of the Coordinator-General works in partnership with the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning to contribute to the Queensland government's commitments to the community by securing responsible economic development, safe workplaces and livable communities.

That concludes my opening statement to the committee. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide an overview of the Office of the Coordinator-General. I look forward to working with the committee to make things possible for a better Queensland. John, I and our teams would now be happy to take any questions the committee may have on our portfolios.

CHAIR: Thanks, Coordinator-General. I appreciate that. For the first question I will go to the deputy chair.

Ms BUSH: Thank you, Chair. Thank you so much for coming along. I have come off the legal affairs committee and had a fantastic relationship with those stakeholders and the relevant departments. I really appreciated getting your comprehensive briefs for this meeting and learning about the really important work that you are doing, so thank you very much. John, I echo your sentiments. I think the committee has such an invaluable role in working with you, and we look forward to doing that. Obviously, we have an important role in oversight, and certainly we look forward to doing that as well and will use the appropriate mechanisms to do that. Today was really just a bit of a 'get to know you' and to hear about your work. Thank you for updating us.

I will start with probably the burning question for us in opposition and that is in relation to the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority board members and the selection of the members to that. I am interested in understanding the process that wrapped around the appointment of those members.

Mr Sosso: That would be a matter you would have to address to the Deputy Premier. We were not involved in that process, so I cannot comment.

Ms BUSH: Understood. Thank you. There was not a departmental involvement; that was a direct appointment by the Deputy Premier, is that correct?

Mr Sosso: I could not say whether it was a direct appointment or not. We were not involved in that.

Ms BUSH: You are not aware of any framework or process that was applied to those appointments?

CHAIR: Deputy Chair, I think Mr Sosso has been quite clear that those questions would be for the Deputy Premier.

Ms BUSH: Thank you. I am sure he can answer that as well. There was a selection process that was in place for the Games Venue and Legacy Delivery Authority that was established under the former government and that process, I understand, was implemented and underway; is that correct?

Mr Sosso: I was not aware that there were any appointments under the previous government. I might be wrong. Were there any appointments made under the previous government?

Ms BUSH: I am not sure that was my question.

Mr Sosso: I am sorry, I was getting—

Ms BUSH: That is okay. Was there a process and were there appointments?

Mr Sosso: I am not aware of any appointments. That is not a matter I can comment on with respect to my position because I was not part of the previous government; I cannot comment on what the previous government was doing.

Ms BUSH: But in terms of your role now within the department, it is not something that the department had carriage of or led then?

Mr Sosso: All I can say is: I can only answer questions as to what has occurred since the present government was sworn in.

Ms BUSH: Because you have been newly appointed; is that correct?

Mr Sosso: Of course.

Ms BUSH: There was no briefing for you then coming in around the history of something that is quite a significant piece of work?

Mr Sosso: I have had many briefings about things. I cannot particularly recall it at the moment. All I can say is: there was no board in existence when I took over.

Ms BUSH: No board in existence, and are you not aware of a briefing on—

Mr Sosso: I cannot say I am not aware of it; I cannot recall it.

Ms BUSH: I am happy to hold it there and I will reconsider.

Mr Sosso: Thank you so much.

Mr JAMES: Thank you for a good briefing. John, you mentioned housing in your opening statement. What would you consider is the No. 1 priority to expedite housing—one of your first tasks?

Mr Sosso: Government has created a housing subcommittee of cabinet. It is chaired by the Deputy Premier and has on it a number of other ministers, including the Minister for Housing and Public Works. The impediments to housing are many. There are issues with respect to regulatory impediments, a lack of housing infrastructure and also lack of access to land. You need a pipeline of land as well. It is multifaceted. One of the important things with respect to this is that one of the government's election commitments was setting up a \$2 billion housing infrastructure fund, which will be rolled out very soon, which will facilitate both the local government and development sectors to fast-track infrastructure for the development of housing. I turn to my colleague, Mr McKee, who might be able to assist you with that important initiative.

Mr McKee: That is right. We have a \$2 billion election commitment which seeks to invest \$1 billion in South-East Queensland and \$1 billion in the rest of Queensland, focused very much on that trunk infrastructure that is intended to unlock the development of housing that would otherwise
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be enabled. We have commenced working with experts across the Public Service, particularly in Local Government, Planning and Housing, working up some information to put to the Deputy Premier. We have been working with the Deputy Premier's office on some iterations and, of course, they are in contact with their stakeholders, too.

I foresee it will not be very long before we are able to come out to both the local government and development sectors, landowners and utility providers to give more clarity about the nature and timing of gaining access to this fund and what the intended outcomes are. But, as the director-general said, it is very much about the infrastructure in and on the ground; it is not the building of houses itself. In our department we know that often developers are keen, or have access to land, and find it challenging to get access to the underground networks and the roads, sewerage and lighting et cetera that can support enabling. So we are looking to bring those cohorts together—all the stakeholders who can collectively demonstrate to us that if the government funded a very specific piece of infrastructure it will indeed lead to the creation of more housing.

Mr Sosso: In conclusion, one of the government's election commitments was resetting the planning partnership with local government with a focus on streamlining the approvals process for planning scheme amendments, while preserving a rigorous community consultation process. One of the key initiatives of the housing subcommittee of cabinet is to unlock church and charity lands. My colleague Peta can address that later if you would like some further information. I trust that, in part, addresses your question.

Mr JAMES: Yes, you are right, it is multifaceted. That is what I was leading to—where do we start? Housing affects everything we do. From my point of view, it is a primary consideration. Infrastructure is obviously first, but where do you start with the infrastructure fund? We would be interested to hear more detail on that infrastructure fund as it comes out. I am hearing that projects need to be shovel ready, and I am wondering how many shovel-ready projects there are around the state.

Mr Sosso: The government is looking at issuing the guidelines in April.

Mr McKee: That is right. We have a timeline that would see us being able to socialise and get feedback from stakeholders this month, ideally. We would use that feedback to inform the preparation of guidelines which we would put out with plenty of time for people to apply—then we would assess. This would all lead up to having announcements in place, we would hope, for the funding to be available on 1 July this year.

Mr JAMES: One last question. You mentioned church and charity land, can you elaborate on this model code that you briefly spoke about? How is that different to the Queensland Development Code? Will it provide an incentive?

Mr Sosso: One would hope so. I will turn to the State Planner.

Ms Harwood: First of all, in relation to the church and charity land, we have made changes to the regulation to allow applicants to lodge streamlined ministerial infrastructure designations for social and affordable housing through the state. We have amended the zone purpose for the Community Facilities Zone. Most church land is zoned for community facilities in Queensland. That zone purpose did not talk about housing; it clarified that housing is appropriate. We have also allowed for church and charities to repurpose a caretaker's residence, or an existing dwellings on their site, for residential use—that has happened already. In consultation with the ministerial taskforce—the committee—there was a view we could also further support local government and that is aligned with the government's intention to empower local government.

We are working in collaboration with the Local Government Association of Queensland on a model code. The model code will be a code that local governments can voluntarily adopt into their planning schemes, should they wish. It will not be mandatory. In working with the Local Government Association of Queensland—in a working group which they have already assembled—we are hoping it will have broad appeal to a variety of local governments across Queensland to possibly adopt into their planning schemes. This may allow for further unlocking of church land than through the Ministerial Infrastructure Designation process. We have worked with the Local Government Association of Queensland to form a working group to decide what the scope is. The drafting of that code will shortly be underway so we are hoping to deliver that model code by the middle of this year—June 2025—and then it will be up to local governments to incorporate it into their schemes if they like. They can also make local adjustments, as well. We would work with them if they wanted to incorporate streamlined amendments so we can get it into their schemes quickly and help with that delivery.

Mr MELLISH: Director-General, has the department finalised the terms of reference for their review of the Gold Coast Light Rail further stages? If so, can you table those terms of reference?

Mr Sosso: I thank the member for the question. The department is working on the terms of reference. It is not finalised at this point but we would hope to finalise them within the next few days.

Mr MELLISH: Can I ask on what basis? What are the writing instructions for those terms of reference, given that there is already a business case review from a different government department underway for that project?

Mr Sosso: Because it is a department of infrastructure one of the key components of it is the infrastructure component. As I understand it, Gold Coast Light Rail stage 4 is in the planning phase. There have been studies and some community consultation, which informed a strategic assessment of service requirements, and a preliminary evaluation, which was published on the department's site. I am sure the honourable member would have seen that preliminary assessment. What is being proposed is quite normal, in fact it is good practice. There has been some work done. My department is responsible for infrastructure. Gold Coast Light Rail stage 4 is a significant infrastructure project. Our task, using the expertise of my Deputy Director-General Leah, who I will turn to shortly, is to basically ensure the work that has been done to date is supplemented by an independent review by a separate agency and to ensure there is a proper, independent objective approach with appropriate community consultation embedded within the overall review. I will turn to Leah briefly. She may be able to add to that.

Ms Kelly: As the Director-General advised, the terms of reference are still under development, but the review is timed to consider existing project options that were considered in the earlier planning stages, as well as community engagement, prior to more detailed and costly analysis being undertaken in a detailed business case, which was the proposed next stage for the Gold Coast Light Rail stage 4 solution. Prior to more detailed analysis being undertaken on a single option, we will review the work undertaken to date, the options considered and undertake community engagement.

Mr Sosso: Member for Aspley, one other slight point: once the terms of reference are finalised, we anticipate a 12-week period to complete our task.

Mr KEMPTON: John, you mentioned land as being a key component to opening up development for housing. In my view, it is probably the key to all development in this state. Since the Native Title Act 1993 and the amendments that were enacted in 1997, native title has become a significant impediment to the future development of this state, in particular in relation to dealings with land and the approach to future acts. Do you agree that the state ought to undertake an across the board review of its policies in dealing with native title and future acts across every department to ensure not only that we have a consistent approach but also that where the policy sits at present it aligns with the law? I will give an example. A quarry that requires a sale permit for the extraction of gravel to be renewed is now dealing with two independent and separate native title parties just trying to get a renewal of a permit. It requires an ILUA, which they have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on with no gain. The question is: do you think we need to review our policy around future acts and native title?

CHAIR: I remind the member for Cook that questions of policy should be directed to the relevant minister. Do you want to add anything?

Mr Sosso: I might be able to assist the member for Cook. I think that is a very important question. I think the primary audience for that question, if I may say so, would be the department of resources. There is a resources cabinet subcommittee chaired by Minister Last. He is looking at expediting the approvals process for key resources projects. He is taking a very proactive approach. The Deputy Premier is a member of that committee. I am also on that committee. Native title is being looked at. As the honourable member would know, I was on the National Native Title Tribunal for 12 years and have had a lot of personal experience in the future act process and understand the important role that native title plays, as does cultural heritage, in resource development. If he was to direct his questions to Minister Last, I am sure he would get a very enthusiastic reply.

CHAIR: I will go back to the member for Aspley.

Mr MELLISH: I will go to the other side of South-East Queensland. In relation to Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line, I note the Deputy Premier has made some comments based on a submission to the 100-day review into infrastructure. Has the department seen this submission and can the department release the submission?

Mr Sosso: The minister's submission to the 100-day review, if he has made a submission, would be a personal submission, not in his role as Deputy Premier and Minister for—

Mr MELLISH: Just to clarify, the submission is from a group called SC2032, which the Deputy Premier has referenced in multiple media releases.

Mr Sosso: Isn't that the South-East Queensland mayors organisation chaired by Lord Mayor Schrinner? I am not sure.

Mr MELLISH: No, it is from a group called Sunshine Coast 2032.

Mr Sosso: I am sorry. If the Deputy Premier has made a submission to the games infrastructure authority 100-day review, it would be in his capacity as member for Kawana.

Mr MELLISH: Sorry, the submission is not from the Deputy Premier. There are many articles in relation to this. The Deputy Premier has been promoting a submission to the 100-day games review saying that the cost of the Sunshine Coast direct rail project is now \$200 billion, but it sounds like the department has not met with that group or the department has not reviewed that submission. Would that be correct?

Mr Sosso: That would be a submission made to the games infrastructure board, not to us. You might be able to assist me. I presume that is a submission with respect to the 100-day review. It has nothing to do with us.

Mr MELLISH: The department has not provided any advice to the Deputy Premier on the cost of Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line is what you are saying?

Mr Sosso: I am saying that we are not in the business of supplying to the Deputy Premier the cost of rail projects.

CHAIR: Mr Sosso, you mentioned in your opening address the machinery-of-government changes following the election. Can you talk to us a little bit more or expand on the importance of having all of that reporting to this committee on the machinery of government and the benefits Queenslanders will see?

Mr Sosso: First, I want to welcome the committee and its oversight of not just this department but also other departments such as the department of transport, which is key to infrastructure provision for the people of Queensland. As a public servant I cannot comment on policy matters, but I think there is a lot of synergy now in this department. We have state development, infrastructure, planning and Economic Development Queensland, so we have within the one department key elements that have drivers to drive the state forward in terms of economic growth and prosperity.

I am privileged to lead a department with a diverse range of people with talent. I have the state planner, I have Michele in state development, I have Leah in infrastructure and I have Natalie, all of whom, together with the other people I have here—I am not trying to leave anyone out; I will be in strife at the end of the hearing. You may never see me appear before you again! I am privileged to lead such a talented team and it is a department which has all the elements in it to, along with the Coordinator-General, drive forward economic development in Queensland. I think the machinery-of-government changes that were put in place to transfer planning back to this department and to have all the elements working together—and I am also on the board of Economic Development Queensland and South Bank Corporation. With your assistance, of course, I think we will be able to do a lot for the state of Queensland over the next four years.

CHAIR: Thank you for being here today despite the commitments to the state Disaster Management Committee, and our thoughts go to the people in North Queensland. Extending that one step further, I was on the Lockyer council when lord mayor Quirk first made the pitch for the Olympics to our South-East Queensland councils. The reason the councils were so enthusiastic about the Olympics bid was the benefit of infrastructure. Can you talk to us a little bit more about the linkage between infrastructure and the Olympics opportunity?

Mr Sosso: Yes, the legacy component of the games is absolutely critical. I will turn to my deputy director-general to give you some further information on that.

Ms Kelly: The infrastructure being considered currently as part of the 100-day review being undertaken by the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority will consider the intricate network of infrastructure projects required to support the games but also ensure that those projects align with long-term planning and fiscal and future legacy objectives. The 100-day review is looking to ensure that those projects that are required in time for the games but will benefit Queenslanders long after the games are delivered in the right places; prioritise that connectivity; ensure integration across venues, both during the games and beyond, to ensure transport projects

and athletes villages support athletes, officials and the operation of the games; and then provide that lasting legacy. We need to ensure that delivery of infrastructure to the games considers deliverability, that legacy impact, value for money and alignment with the state's long-term growth strategies.

Mr KING: Mr Sosso, you mentioned in your introductory speech the change back to the 24-hour right of entry. My question will be for Ms Heelan. With that change there is a fear in the industry—and no-one here knows I am an electrician who has worked in the industry for a couple of decades on construction sites and in mining—and, sadly, it is my experience that sometimes a time period allows certain persons in control of a business unit or contractors to clean up a site after an incident before people get there to investigate. That is why I had some concerns about the 24-hour right of entry. Are people allowed to take photographs to capture a scene at the time of the incident for the investigation that will follow, albeit 24 hours later? Are there any protections in place to make sure that scene is locked down in that case?

Ms Heelan: You raise an interesting and important part. We are very strong in ensuring Queensland workers are safe each and every day that they go to work. You are correct: in November 2024 we made changes to the work health and safety legislation in relation to entry requirements. There is now a requirement that was reintroduced for entry permit holders to provide at least 24 hours notice of entry before entering a workplace to investigate a suspected contravention. However, I need to be very clear that if there is an immediate or imminent risk to workers' health or safety, that provision does not apply. If those two things come into play—immediate or imminent risk to workers' safety—the 24 hours notice is not applicable.

In relation to your reference to taking photos, which then extends to videos and measurements, those provisions that were introduced in August 2024 were omitted to not allow entry permit holders to take photos or videos or conduct tests from 1 January 2025, but that is for workplace health and safety entry permit holders. We have other provisions within the legislation. We have health and safety representatives, we have workers—there are other avenues if they feel the need to document that evidence where their workplace perhaps is unsafe, so those provisions are still applicable.

Mr KING: So workplace health and safety representatives can still capture the scene. I know we are all very keen to make sure workers continue to work safely. Thank you very much for your answer.

Mr JAMES: Following up on my previous questions to you, Mr McKee, with regard to the \$2 billion infrastructure fund, I understand \$1 billion is guaranteed for regional Queensland. Regional Queensland, in particular the small councils, does not have the funds that Brisbane City or the Gold Coast have to get their projects shovel ready. I am tipping there will be very few that are shovel ready, if any at all. Could the terms of reference or the criteria for applications when you are deliberating on this be expanded to funds for planning for this infrastructure? Could you perhaps get the plans ready? That would be of great assistance to the small regional councils.

Mr McKee: I understand the question. It is a concept we have used previously in infrastructure or capital grants rounds particularly aimed towards councils. We have learned through experience that often councils can put forward better applications with a better likelihood of achieving their benefits if they have been through a proper planning process and they have had the time to get good advice to support their business cases. There have been occasions in the past when we have dedicated a certain amount of the funding available specifically for working up submissions for future rounds. We will be informing the Deputy Premier's office when it comes to designing ways to ensure that the funding meets its intended objectives and understand that this is intended to assist housing across the whole state.

Another concept we have considered before is that very remote and Indigenous councils have been ring-fenced as well for another type of assessment or levels of support. We are working closely with the department of local government—at least the local government function within the department—and water, who are assisting us with that briefing material. We will be putting forward our experience with a package of options for the government to consider hopefully not too long from now. We do understand the issue you raise.

Mr Sosso: I mention to the member that we are aware of the issue. It is an issue which has been raised in the past by the Local Government Association of Queensland. It is a real issue, a real concern, and we will be addressing it.

Ms BUSH: John, I agree: you seem to have an excellent team here with you. Well done on that. It is so important to surround ourselves with the best and brightest. Of course, we have Peta now who has joined your team as the chief planner. If we have time, I would not mind hearing from Peta about some of the priorities and opportunities coming up. Before we get to that—

Mr Sosso: We have formed a unity ticket here.

Ms BUSH: Absolutely. Perhaps before that, can you step us through the selection process that was used to appoint in that role, where it was advertised and who convened the panel? Could you give us some insight into ensuring there is a process?

Mr Sosso: Absolutely. I will get Michael to assist me in one second. It was an independent review process, an independent panel. I chaired the panel. Also on the panel were the director-general of Transport and Main Roads and the director-general of Resources. We had a scribe. It was publicly advertised. There was a period—was it four weeks that we gave people, or longer?

Mr McKee: I think it might have been around three weeks.

Mr Sosso: I cannot recall. In colloquial terms, it was not a captain's pick; it was an independent selection process. Peta was determined unanimously by the persons on the selection panel to be the most meritorious candidate. A recommendation went through to the person who made the decision, who happened to be the person sitting on my right, the Coordinator-General. From memory, we received 28 applications. There was a shortlist of persons. They were all interviewed over a period of a couple of hours and Peta was the most meritorious candidate. She was previously working in the area. The person who was acting in the position, Anna McGrath, was not an applicant. Of the persons who did apply, Peta—I do not want to say too much—

Ms BUSH: Of course not. I am sorry, Peta, to do that in front of you.

Mr Sosso: There are some privacy issues. I can assure you that Peta applied independently. There was an independent process. She has the requisite skills and background, and the appointment panel were of the view that she would be a fantastic State Planner and her recommendation was made accordingly.

Ms BUSH: For context, I come from an electorate that has a lot of public servants, so upholding public confidence is something that is important. When there are opportunities to reinforce that I think it is a great opportunity, and you have done that. Do you want to make a comment, too?

Mr Coggan: As the delegate, one of the things I am signing off on is that these things have gone through the proper process. I would say that I support John in his description of the process that was run and that it was a standard government process.

Ms BUSH: That satisfies everything. Thanks for being up-front. I do not know if we have time to hear from Peta around her priorities, Chair, or whether that is something you would prefer to move on from. You have only just got your feet under the desk, Peta.

Ms Harwood: My priorities are aligned with the government's commitments. We will be looking at all of the regional plans, as John said in his introduction. There are 13 regional plans. Some will be reviewed and some will be completely new regional plans.

We do not deliver housing in the department; Planning Group enables housing through approvals but also through local government planning schemes and working with local governments to unlock land, increase densities, change zonings—all those sorts of things. That will be a priority of ours in terms of making sure we are working fairly closely with local governments so they can amend their schemes quickly and working on those regional plans as well to make sure they are fit for purpose for the growth projections in those areas.

Ms BUSH: Do I have time for another follow-up question for Peta?

CHAIR: No, we are running out of time. I think the term that we use is 'genuine partnership' with local governments. We are looking forward to that.

Mr KEMPTON: John, how do you propose to address the imbalance between the delivery of major infrastructure to the south-east and the regions, in particular in view of the resources that will be put to the Olympic Games in the coming years?

Mr Sosso: That is a fairly big question. The philosophy underpinning this government is to ensure the regions are front and centre in all of the decisions we make. As was pointed out, of the \$2 billion housing infrastructure fund, 50 per cent is allocated for the regions. With respect to the Olympics, there is a focus on regional Queensland and ensuring they get a fair share of the cake in that regard.

I could say to the member for Cook that embedded in the thinking of the government, which is then transmitted through to the public servants who have to implement the policy of the government, is a focus on ensuring that regional development is front and centre. One of the election commitments

of our minister was firstly working constructively with his federal counterpart to advocate on Queensland's behalf to ensure Queensland receives its fair share of federal infrastructure funding, with a focus on the regions, and working with the Treasurer and the Minister for Public Works to lift productivity to ensure that the regions, again, would benefit from it. I could sit here and talk to the honourable member for an hour about all the various components of that, but I assure him that the government's commitment to focusing on regional development is at the forefront of our consciousness and guides our decisions and how we approach our tasks.

Mr KEMPTON: Thank you.

CHAIR: We have time for one final question.

Ms BUSH: Peta, my question was really just trying to understand how you manage that challenge of unlocking land and prioritising housing while also engaging with communities that might be sensitive to overdevelopment or to development. I am just curious about your plans to tackle that.

Ms Harwood: As I said, through the regional planning processes there is quite a rigorous community consultation process. We take the Government Statistician's Office's population projections so we know what we are working towards. We work closely with the councils in the regional planning area, so we form a regional organisation of councils and consult with those. We consult very much with industry as well as community through that process and then that ultimately leads to a regional plan and that is implemented through the local government planning schemes, so it is a very collaborative process in terms of how that is worked through. Ultimately, the community get to have their say further when there are development applications, which sometimes the state is involved in as well.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for that answer. I think the average was that it was taking two years for planning schemes to be dealt with. I know that we will improve on that greatly. Mr Sosso, I thank you and your team very much. Our time is up for this session. As we said at the outset, this was about getting the committee to understand the broad range of our portfolio areas, so thank you very much for your time and the answers that you have provided to us today.

Ms Heelan: Chair, if I may provide just one element of clarity to the member for Kurwongbah's question in relation to photographs, the act is silent on the taking of photographs. However, the role of the elected health and safety representative, as you would likely know, is very much to undertake workplace inspections, workplace investigations and represent their workers or their work group. There may be situations where taking photographs is not appropriate such as in hospitals or correctional facilities et cetera, so I just wanted to be very clear that it is not an issue. The act is silent, but they have a very important role. In the event that the health and safety rep is not getting a satisfactory outcome, the workplace health and safety inspectorate is always available from the regulator.

CHAIR: Thanks for that clarification. We appreciate that. The time for this session has now expired. Thank you very much. Enjoy the rest of your day.

The committee adjourned at 11.16 am.