

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE F

Ms K. L. Struthers (Chair)

Mr G. B. Fenlon

Ms R. T. Lee Long

Hon. V. P. Lester

Hon. K. R. Lingard

Mr S. G. Rodgers

Mrs D. C. Scott

EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND YOUTH, AND THE ARTS**IN ATTENDANCE**

Hon. M. J. Foley, Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and Minister for the Arts

Department of Employment and Training

Mr K. Smith, Director-General

Mr F. Vardanega, General Manager, Business Development Division

Arts Queensland

Ms M. O'Donnell, Director-General

Mr P. Willett, Executive Manager, Business Resources

Dr I. Galloway, Director, Queensland Museum

⁰⁰¹ The committee commenced at 8.33 a.m.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the meeting of Estimates Committee F now open. I welcome the minister, public officials and members of the public who are in attendance today. The committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2001 for the areas set out in the sessional orders of 30 May 2001. The organisational units will be examined in the following order: Employment, Training and Youth and the Arts, Education, and Industrial Relations. The committee has also agreed that it will suspend the hearings for the following breaks: morning tea, a five-minute break at 10 o'clock; lunch, 12.45 to 1.45 p.m.; and afternoon tea, 3.45 to 4 p.m.

I remind members of the committee and the minister that the time limit for questions is one minute and answers are to be no longer than three minutes. A single chime will give a 15-second warning and a double chime will sound at the expiration of these time limits. An extension of time for answers may be given with the consent of the questioner. A double chime will also sound two minutes after an extension of time has been given. The sessional orders require that at least half the time available for questions and answers in respect of each organisational unit is to be allotted to non-government members. Any time expended when the committee deliberates in private is to be equally apportioned between government and non-government members.

For the benefit of Hansard, I ask departmental officers to identify themselves before they answer a question. These proceedings are similar to parliament to the

extent that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. In that regard, I remind members of the public that in accordance with Standing Order 195 any person admitted to a public hearing may be excluded at the discretion of the Chair or by order of the committee. The sessional orders provide that a member who is not a member may, with the committee's leave, ask the minister questions.

In relation to media coverage of the Estimates Committee F hearing, the committee has resolved that still photographs and silent film television coverage be permitted for the first five minutes of each department. My final request is that, if you have a mobile phone, would you please make sure it is turned off, and if you have phone calls to make, please do so outside the chamber.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the Department of Employment, Training and Youth and the Arts open for examination. The time allotted is three hours. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr FOLEY: Yes. I acknowledge at the outset that we gather here on the traditional lands of Aboriginal people. The greatest single issue facing this department, the government and the people of Queensland remains the issue of unemployment. As long as one in 11 Queensland job seekers are out of work, this will continue to be the top priority of the government.

When the government came to office in 1998 we pledged \$263 million to help create 24,500 jobs over four years under Breaking the Unemployment Cycle. We did so because the labour market programs had been abandoned by coalition state and federal governments. The target that we initially set of 24,500 jobs over four years was reached 18 months ahead of schedule in March this year. In fact, the program Breaking the Unemployment Cycle has been expanded to be a \$470 million program over six years with a target of helping to create 56,000 jobs. That task is a fundamental one for this department. The program has had an impact on those most in need—that is, the area of long-term unemployment—and there are, I am pleased to say, 7,700 fewer long-term unemployed people in Queensland than there were at the time the coalition was in office.

In this budget the government has allocated more than \$100 million to provide more than 13,200 job and training opportunities for Queenslanders. We are introducing programs for mature age and young people. The Experience Pays Program and the Back to Work Program specifically target the needs of mature age unemployed persons over 45 years of age, and a three-year program will cost \$1.5 million in that regard.

There is a very serious problem with respect to early school leavers—the young people who fall into the gap between school and the workplace. To that end, we have allocated a \$5 million program entitled Get Set for Work to deliver the Kick Start for Youth Program. We have also made provision for a Youth for the Environment and Local Communities Program to target areas of environmental protection, horticulture and waste management and to provide jobs for young people.

The training program set out in the budget delivers the first down payment on our commitment to invest \$2 billion to provide training for one million Queenslanders over the next three years. We will further expand the training of workers for the new economy. In 2001-02 some \$33 million will be delivered in IT&T training to Queenslanders—almost twice that of 1998. The budget allocates some

\$726.4 million for vocational education and training, including a record \$538.8 million for TAFE Queensland. That will offer some 350,000 student places in 2001-02. Together with the provision of over \$55 million in capital works, this clearly demonstrates our ongoing commitment to TAFE as a public provider.

In keeping with the status of Queensland as the Smart State, we will make available \$10 million to fund the establishment of the Aviation Centre of Excellence in Brisbane. We will continue to work with industry to seek out job and training opportunities in areas such as the light metals industry. We will continue efforts in the Community Training Partnerships and build a Queensland education and training industry export status.

In the area of youth, the importance of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships will be supported in this budget and we will continue to implement our Youth Participation Strategy.

I take the opportunity to thank staff of my department of Employment and Training and Arts Queensland for their assistance in the preparation for the important work of this committee.

The CHAIRMAN: The period for questions will commence. I call the member for Greenslopes.

Mr FENLON: Page 22 of the MPS shows the grants and other contributions for vocational education and training services as \$132.912 million for 2000-01, with a figure of \$136.352 million for 2001-02. This seems a minimal increase considering the obvious increase in demand for VET training. Have there been any further negotiations to secure more funding from the Commonwealth for VET services?

Mr FOLEY: This is a very serious issue. For over 12 months now the government, along with other state governments, have been lobbying the Commonwealth government for an acceptable growth funding arrangement. Earlier this year I attended a meeting, together with other ministers for employment and training, to secure funding from the Commonwealth. An initial offer was made. It was rejected as being pathetically inadequate.

I am pleased to say, though, that persistence has paid off in that the Commonwealth has offered, and we have agreed to accept, an arrangement under which the Commonwealth will inject some \$225 million into the national vocational education and training system. Queensland's share of that will be over \$42 million over the next three years, which the state government will match dollar for dollar. Those Commonwealth funds do not appear in the budget documents that the committee has before it for the simple reason that we were only able to get the agreement to those extra funds following a long period of persistence and negotiation with the Commonwealth. The new deal that has been made available is more than three times that previously offered by the Commonwealth and vindicates the action of the states in holding out for a better deal.

When the Australian National Training Authority agreement was established back in the early nineties—and I had the honour of serving as Minister for Employment and Training at that time—it was the single most significant shift in the quality of vocational education and training. There was a serious danger of the system falling into the doldrums, but the negotiations have borne fruit. While the Commonwealth contribution is less than that which we would like, it at least enabled us to form the basis of a reasonable starting point.

So those extra Commonwealth funds to Queensland and to the other states will hopefully enable us to deliver better programs, particularly through the TAFE

system, but also will enable a range of other programs in the competitive funding area, in user choice and across the system to take place. That was long overdue, but I am pleased to say that it has finally come about.

Mr FENLON: The 10 per cent training policy appears to be a great success. Can you outline what has been achieved through this policy and have any other governments followed Queensland's lead?

Mr FOLEY: The 10 per cent training policy is all about generating jobs and training for Queenslanders, in particular the government, and using the power of the public purse to do that. Following extensive consultation with industry, cabinet approved revisions to the 10 per cent training policy in September 1999. The revisions to this policy take into account industry needs and provide proof that the government is serious about assisting contractors to meet the terms of the policy.

It is all about ensuring that 10 per cent of the labour on government building contracts is devoted to training—for apprenticeships and traineeships. In keeping with the government's commitment to provide more jobs in the construction industry, the revamped policy has been extensively marketed; regional workshops have been conducted to raise community awareness of the project; advertisements have been run in trade magazines; and brochures have been sent to all prequalified contractors. This is bearing results. Through the reinvigoration of that policy, it was expected that over six financial years 1,800 training opportunities will be generated. I am pleased to report that outcomes to date have exceeded expectations, with a total of 1,639 training opportunities being created since late 1999 as a result of the policy.

The government will continue to maximise training opportunities on Queensland government capital works projects through the 10 per cent training policy. The policy will continue to be strongly marketed to the building and construction industry and, where necessary, action will be taken to ensure compliance occurs. There is little doubt that this 10 per cent training policy is making a valuable contribution to the development of a strong and productive work force in the building and construction industry. Some other states have versions of this policy and even the federal government is also looking at adopting something similar.

Just recently I was on Palm Island where there is some construction work taking place and there is a special program being undertaken with the strong support of the Department of Public Works in relation to employment on building projects in indigenous communities. I was very pleased to meet with a number of the apprentices and trainees on that project. They are getting some practical benefits and good, structured training opportunities out of it. It is not so many years ago that I recall visiting communities where there was simply a fly in, fly out arrangement with subcontractors doing the work without locals getting the benefit of apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities. I am pleased to see that that program is producing some results.

Mr FENLON: One of the policy initiatives taken to the last election which is included in your Ministerial Portfolio Statements is the Aviation Centre of Excellence. Could you provide the committee with details of this initiative and what action the department is taking to bring this policy initiative to fruition?

Mr FOLEY: We are trying to ensure that the economic base of Queensland is broadened. We have a strong traditional base in primary industries and in commodities, but we need to ensure that we have growth industries in the new

economy. The Aviation Centre of Excellence is part of that process of diversifying the economy. A new state-of-the-art aviation industry training centre near Brisbane Airport will, we believe, cement Queensland's role as the hub for the aerospace industry in the Asia-Pacific region. The centre will take its first students in February next year. It will attract aviation and aerospace industry employers to Queensland, creating a centre of excellence for the industry. In its first year of operation the centre will train 200 aircraft maintenance apprentices, trainees and prevocational students. That number is expected to grow to 1,000 training places by 2005. This is a real growth sector for Queensland.

We have seen employment in the aviation industry increase by an average of almost 20 per cent a year over the past 10 years. This world class training centre will bring together private training organisations, TAFE institutes and universities. It will provide cabin crew, aerospace medicine, air traffic control, catering and maintenance training. The training facility will give our students, job seekers and workers the chance to be considered the best in the growing aviation industry in the Asia-Pacific region. In this budget we have allocated almost \$2.6 million, part of a \$10 million investment over the next three years. This is a record level of spending and it reflects the importance that the government places on the potential of this industry.

Apart from apprenticeships and traineeships, much of the training will be delivered on a fee-for-service basis. The centre is expected to be self-funding and in full private ownership within three years. The centre has already received support from Qantas, Boeing Australia, Virgin Airlines and the Brisbane Airport Corporation. It is all about really having the skills base for the Smart State. It is trying to bring government and industry together to provide new jobs, new opportunities and the skills that can make them happen. The centre's location in Brisbane Airport is, of course, in the heart of Queensland's growing aerospace precinct. We need to ensure that we service the strengths of the traditional industries in Queensland, but we also need to provide for the skill base necessary to grow a new economy.

Mr RODGERS: Recently the Premier announced a light metals industry proposal for central Queensland. The proposal includes the creation of 7,000 new jobs. Could you advise what actions your department is taking in regard to this initiative?

Mr FOLEY: This area of jobs in the light metals industry is an extremely important area for the future. We are going to help build the skills required to equip central Queensland residents with thousands of jobs expected in the light metals industry. The planned and proposed project in central Queensland will create more than 7,000 jobs for Queenslanders. This means that we have to have a metals and engineering skills strategy in partnership with industry. Let's look at some of the projects in central Queensland.

There is the \$3 billion Aldoga aluminium smelter at Gladstone, a \$1.2 billion magnesium plant at Stanwell by Australian Magnesium Corporation and a proposed \$739 million Marlborough nickel project. The government, through this department, has worked with these employers and others in the light metals industry to develop vocational education and training solutions to meet the industry's skill needs in the region.

I can inform the committee that we are forming a Fitzroy industry regional skills training committee, which will ensure that local people can gain the training they need to take advantage of these jobs. The committee comprises community, industry and government representatives. The committee will initially focus on the

skill needs of Australian Magnesium Corporation but will provide assistance to other major projects in the area. The department is also working with these employers to explore options for flexible ways to deliver training on site, models for traineeships and options for funding of training. We are working with light metals employers, such as Australian Magnesium Corporation, to develop a new training package that is tailored to the industry's needs. The department's Community Jobs Plan projects in central Queensland over the past 18 months have aimed to give local unemployed people skills that will equip them to work on major projects such as these.

What we really need to do in the area of new industry is to make sure that we, as the providers of training, give strategic assistance so that Queenslanders have the necessary skills to get these jobs to grow these industries. The government, as I said at the outset, regards the challenge of unemployment as the absolute top priority of the government. That means a whole range of immediate action, such as the Community Jobs Plan. It also means initiatives such as this which build a skills base for the light metals industry, which is going to be one of the most important industries of the future.

The CHAIRMAN: I refer to the \$2,000 cash incentive to employers for the employment of additional apprentices and trainees in skill shortage occupations. What has been the take-up of this incentive generally and in particular by employers in the Brisbane south region?

Mr FOLEY: The take-up has been good. We need to do all we can to encourage employers. The \$2,000 cash incentive is one way of doing it. We would like to be able to persuade all employers that the employment of apprentices and trainees is a good thing in itself. It is good for the industry; it is good for the employer; it is good for the apprentices and trainees.

The cash incentive of up to \$2,200, which includes GST, is available through the department's private sector employment program. Since July 2000 this initiative has delivered jobs to 2,398 additional apprentices and trainees in skill shortage occupations by paying 1,473 private sector employers through the state just under \$5 million—that is \$4.893 million—in cash bonuses. Its success is evidenced further by the number of additional traineeships and apprenticeships created Queensland-wide since the program commenced in 1998. So far 10,214 additional apprentices and trainees have been employed in the private sector.

Unemployed people in the Brisbane south region have benefited through this program. A number of 756 apprenticeships and 133 traineeships have been created in skill shortage occupations, with 539 private sector employers receiving just over \$1.7 million in cash incentives to put on these 889 additional apprentices and trainees. These cash incentives have been a real boost for private sector employers, particularly small business which has suffered as a consequence of the introduction of the GST—a disastrous attempt by the federal government at reforming Australia's tax system. But this government, the Queensland government, is not going to walk away from those skill shortage industries and employers at a time when they are being decimated by the federal government's GST. Rather, we are tackling this problem head-on by extending our support to further skill shortage growth in emerging industries. The government will play a significant role in the emergence of new industries by supporting them through programs like this, the private sector employment program.

Just recently I initiated a review of the program in an endeavour to attract the skills base necessary to address the future design of the work force. Through a peak

policy council within government, the Jobs Policy Council, the Queensland government has identified a number of industries—aged care, disability support, polymer processing and aquaculture as emerging or growth industries eligible to receive incentives. In addition, qualification levels within the aviation industry will be extended to include the lower level traineeships.

The CHAIRMAN: Can you outline what budget initiatives are in place for 2001-02 to assist mature age unemployed people, and how can employers in community organisations in my area play a role in assisting mature age people through these programs?

Mr FOLEY: I thank Madam Chair for the question, because I am mindful of her personal interest in the issue of mature age unemployment. There are two new programs that are being introduced through this budget, that is, Experience Pays and Back to Work. These programs will build on the assistance that is already available to mature age unemployed people through programs like the Community Jobs Plan and the Community Employment Assistance Program under the overall initiative of the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle. We promised these two new programs in the election, and this budget delivers on that promise.

The existing programs have already provided jobs and training opportunities for long-term unemployed people over 45 years of age. In fact, the participation rate for long-term unemployed mature age people under the Community Jobs Plan has been 18 per cent and for the Community Employment Assistance Program it has been 31 per cent. Experience from these programs and from research undertaken indicates that this age group faces particular difficulties in re-entering the work force. With each election, I am always mindful of the prospect of being a mature age unemployed person myself, so I take a particular interest in this area.

I turn now to the two initiatives. Experience Pays will boost job opportunities for mature age job seekers through the provision of a \$4,400 wage subsidy to private sector employers. This wage subsidy will complement the skills development and employment preparation assistance that is available through other programs. It is expected that at least 1,350 eligible job seekers will be assisted in this way over three years at a cost of \$5.4 million. That is a sweetener for the employers.

What about the employees? For them, the other program, Back to Work, helps them get ready. It is a job ready program that will help job seekers over 45 to get a grasp of computers, the Internet and other information technologies—skills that will enable them to return to the work force. The program is likely to assist 3,000 job seekers over three years at a cost of \$1.5 million over that period. They will learn new job search skills and be better placed. Just the other day when I launched this program it was driven home to me by a man who had become unemployed in mature age. He said, 'Up until now I've only needed a pair of strong hands and a pair of dirty boots to get a job.' He now has to write a resume and go through job selections, something he had never had to do before.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for government questions has expired.

Mr LINGARD: Minister, I note in your opening comments that you made no reference to the unemployment rate, even though some departments are making reference to it in their budget papers. What do you as Employment Minister believe the unemployment rate will be over the next three years?

Mr FOLEY: The unemployment rate is actually set out in the budget papers. The budget papers indicate employment growth of two per cent in Queensland over the next year compared with the forecast growth of only one per cent nationally. The

unemployment rate for 2001-02 is forecast at eight per cent in year average terms, with the rate projected to fall during the course of the year. If you look at the period between September 2000 and June 2001, Queensland's unemployment rate increased from 7.3 per cent to 9 per cent, an increase of 1.7 per cent, while the unemployment rate for Australia as a whole also increased from 6.1 per cent to 6.9 per cent.

As I indicated at the outset, we regard the unemployment level as unacceptably high. We need to attack it in both the short term and the long term. In the short term, that means programs that provide assistance directly to help people get jobs, such as the 220 persons, for example, in Beaudesert who have been able to get jobs through the government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative and things such as funding of just over \$139,000 to the Beaudesert Shire Council for the second phase of the Tambourine Mountain community project. These are immediate things that can help people, for example, in your own electorate. I mention those because I think so often we get inured to the percentages. It is easy to lose track of the fact that these are real people who need real assistance.

What we are seeking to do is to face up to those unpalatable employment statistics and take action both immediately through the employment programs and in the longer term through training programs, such as TAFE and private training providers, and in the growth of new industries like the light metals industry and the Aviation Centre of Excellence that we have discussed. It is significant to note that the economic growth forecast is actually significantly higher than employment growth. That means that we have to try harder.

Mr LINGARD: Minister, as you well know, you have not committed anything in that answer. I asked you for the percentages over the next three years, because these percentages are necessary for the government departments to work on. I am asking you as Employment Minister what you believe the percentages will be over the next three years.

Mr FOLEY: With respect, I gave the figures for the period from September to now. I also indicated the forecast in the budget of employment growth. The budget forecasts employment to grow by two per cent over this financial year in year average terms. The unemployment rate for 2001-02 is forecast, as I said, at eight per cent in year average terms, with the rate projected to fall throughout the year. That is what I said and that is what appears in the budget papers. I might just say, though, that one of the interesting features that emerges from the budget is a four per cent overall economic growth but a two per cent growth in employment. The significance of that is that the employment growth is not as fast as the overall economic growth. I mention that because it drives home the point that we need to do more than merely generate the economy. What we need to do is to identify those areas of the economy that will actually generate jobs and target and assist those, and that is what we are trying to do.

Mr LINGARD: When do you believe unemployment will get down to a five per cent rate?

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the member that that is a second question. Minister, do you want that taken as a second question? The minister has a further three minutes to answer.

Mr LINGARD: The minister stopped, and I believe I am allowed to start as soon as the minister stops.

The CHAIRMAN: The minister stopped for a drink of water, I think.

Mr FOLEY: No, that is okay. I had finished my answer. I am happy to take the question. I thank the honourable member for the question. There is no easy answer to that. We believe that the level of unemployment is unacceptably high. We set out a target of five per cent because we believe that we have to have something to work towards. We do not think that the current situation is anything remotely like satisfactory. That is why this government is totally committed to working to reduce the unemployment rate and to generate jobs in both the short term and the long term. But I cannot say to you or to this committee that that target will be achieved in the course of this financial year. We are going to continue to keep it as our very top priority. It would be easier to simply abandon these targets. We believe and think that the community believes that it is the responsibility of governments to do all that we possibly can to attack unemployment and to try to generate jobs in the short term and the long term.

In Queensland we have encountered a number of significant difficulties, including the GST, petrol prices and economic management issues of the federal government. In recent months we have seen some more encouraging statistics come through in the job vacancy areas. It is traditionally the case that Queensland is first in and first out of these economic cycles. We have an economy that is particularly dependent on the construction industry, and it is pleasing to see that the construction industry is returning to a better state of health. We simply cannot rely on the traditional industries, because we need to ensure that when agriculture, forestry and fisheries go through hard times we have a broader base, hence the significant investment in the film industry, which has actually been a very strong source of employment growth in recent years, and hence the investment in information technology and the development of the Smart State, biotechnology and the recently announced initiatives for nanotechnology. All of those initiatives go to the long-term matters. With regard to the short-term and immediate matters, we continue to believe that those labour market programs are worth while. I only wish the federal government would work with us to generate some of those jobs in the short to medium-term so that we could make a further assault on that target.

Mr LINGARD: Minister, what is happening now is that you are sending out a whole lot of varied statements to the public. Your budget papers start with the statement that the government remains committed to the five per cent by 2003. The Premier says that it is virtually impossible to achieve that target in five years. The Treasury papers say that the unemployment rate was eight per cent last year and it will be eight per cent this year. That is the budget papers it is working on. What I am saying is that surely you as a minister can tell all of the departments what percentage you are working to, because otherwise you have a whole lot of varied statements going out into the community. I am asking you this: what do you as Employment Minister tell the other departments?

Mr FOLEY: With respect, what I tell the other departments is what I have told this committee and what, with respect, the other ministers have told their respective committees and the world at large. We acknowledge that the five per cent target is not going to be reached in the course of this budget year. We acknowledge that employment growth of two per cent is likely to occur, notwithstanding the four per cent growth in the economy. We acknowledge that the unemployment rate for 2001-02 is forecast at eight per cent. You suggest that we are sending different messages. With respect, I think we are sending the same message.

The message is that we regard those figures as unacceptably high. We do not subscribe to the view of the federal government, which takes a *laissez-faire*

approach to abandon labour market programs and leaves it to the marketplace and hopes for the best. We believe that it is the responsibility of government to reach out to people and to provide job opportunities and training opportunities. That is why we are doing the Community Jobs Plan in your electorate and in the electorates of all of the people here.

In fact, one of the startling differences in my experience from having been in this job back in the mid-1990s to this time is the fact that we are largely doing it on our own in Queensland. In relation to the period from 1992 to 1995 when I had the honour of serving this portfolio, every time we would engage in one of these Community Jobs Plans there would be a corresponding Commonwealth program that we could work together with in the area of labour market programs for the long-term unemployed, for people with a disability, other disadvantaged groups and so on. We were able to work together. That is really no longer possible. The Queensland taxpayer, through the government and through this department, is funding these programs, and we support them. We think they need to be done. I just wish that the Commonwealth government would work with us to try to achieve that.

Mr LINGARD: Minister, you have admitted in that statement that you acknowledge that you cannot get down to five per cent unemployment, yet you have allowed the budget papers of your department on page 1-1—the first page—to start with the statement—

The Government remains committed to implementing a range of programs and policies aimed at meeting its target of reducing unemployment to 5% by 2003.

You have just acknowledged that you cannot get there. Why would you allow your budget papers to state that on the very first page?

Mr FOLEY: With respect, that is not what I said. I said that we would not achieve five per cent during the course of this budget. That is what I said.

Mr LINGARD: It will be interesting to read that.

Mr FOLEY: I invite you to look at the words which follow in the budget paper to which you referred. You quite correctly quoted that, but may I read on to say what the budget papers indicate at page 1-1. It states—

However, its ability to influence unemployment in the short term is significantly affected by a range of factors that are largely outside its control—

that is, the government's control—

including the slowing national economy, the uncertainty of the international economy, and changes in Queensland's labour market such as the growth in casual and contract employment.

We believe that it is worth while to have a target. We believe that the current situation is grossly unacceptable. We make no apology for putting this issue at the very top of the government's agenda. We think that in a caring society there is no other way one can proceed.

Similarly, in terms of producing prosperity for Queensland in the longer term, we simply cannot afford to allow these sorts of levels to remain without strenuous government intervention. If one looks back to the period of long-term unemployment after the drought in 1983, one sees that those who had been long-term unemployed, over six months or 12 months, took an awful long time to get back, even when the economy picked up. Why? Because employers, understandably, took from the most recently employed and left the long-term unemployed to wait and wait and wait. We learned a lesson from that. It seems to me that that is why labour market programs are so important.

Employment growth is expected to improve over 2001-02 as interest rate cuts take their effect and investment levels recover. Of course, the state government's lowering of the payroll tax and our micro-economic reforms, such as the introduction of competition into the energy sector, should also foster long-term jobs growth. Queensland is to reduce payroll tax from 4.9 per cent to 4.8 per cent, effective from 1 July, compared with New South Wales at 6.2 per cent and Victoria at 5.45 per cent as at 1 July 2001. In addition, Queensland has a threshold of \$850,000, which is far higher than the other states.

Mr LINGARD: Minister, I noted your initial comments about what you inherited from the previous government. The Queensland unemployment rate is now higher than when your party gained government. The ABS figures specifically show that in May 1998 it was 8.3 per cent and in June it was 8.6 per cent. Quite honestly, why has your department failed?

Mr FOLEY: I do not accept the proposition that my department has failed. In fact, I will take the opportunity to pay tribute to my department. I think it is a very fine department and I think it is a department that does very important work. The work it does in the provision of labour market programs—that is, job creation—the work it does in the training area and the work it does in the youth area are, in my view, in accordance with world's best practice.

I will take your question to mean: how is it that we have significant problems with unemployment? Let us start with the nature of the Queensland economy. The first thing to say about employment in the Queensland economy is that, of all the Australian economies, Queensland's is the economy that relies heaviest on small business. Small business is the backbone of the Queensland economy. It is the largest area of employment. That, of course, is the area that has been hit hardest by the GST. People say, 'The GST applies in every other state.' Yes, it does, but it hits hardest in small business, and Queensland has proportionately more small business than the other states.

There are also issues to do with the nature of the Queensland economy. The agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries have experienced problems and there is a dependency on construction. Those industries have been hardest hit, not just in Queensland but also throughout the nation. Because the Queensland economy is dependent on them to a larger extent, there have been those increases.

I guess the most dramatic impact was the job losses in construction following the introduction of the GST. Agriculture did sustain a large fall in employment as poor seasonal conditions in certain regions in the state forced extensive job lay-offs. I think you also have to look at the question of jobs growth. In Queensland we are seeing significant jobs growth. Jobs growth under the Beattie government is some 5.9 per cent, or 93,900, in contrast with the coalition's jobs growth of 84,500, or 5.6 per cent, over a 28-month period.

Mr LINGARD: Minister, you make continual reference to the capital works program and how this will help employment. I show you the papers for the capital works program for the last budget and this budget. In this budget the capital works being undertaken by this government are down by three per cent. I refer to page 1-5. Also, last year's budget papers state that capital outlays will have a significant impact on employment and it gives the figure of 61,034. This year's statement says that capital works will create 46,300 jobs. That is a difference of 15,000. In other words, there are 15,000 fewer jobs, yet you are emphasising how that is going to help employment. I say it is a decrease and the papers show that it is 15,000 fewer jobs, and you have not even taken account of the three per cent inflation.

Mr FOLEY: Let us look at the ways in which the capital works budget does assist. One of the things we have sought continually to do is ensure that capital works occur throughout regional Queensland and not just in the capital cities. Your question is directed towards the general issue of the extent to which capital works for government as a whole relates to questions of unemployment.

Certainly we need to ensure that that capital works program is driven, and it is being driven—it is a strong source of jobs growth—but we also need to invest in jobs in the new economy. Particularly at a time when one is seeing recovery in the construction industry, we need to ensure that we invest in areas such as the Aviation Centre of Excellence and the light metals industry so that we are building jobs in the medium and longer term. Certainly in the TAFE sector, we see the \$55 million worth of capital infrastructure that is involved as a very significant investment in the long-term future of jobs in this state.

When one looks at how government can best assist employment, one really has to look at it in terms of addressing some of the underlying structural weaknesses of the Queensland economy. That means that we have to get into things such as biotechnology, nanotechnology, aviation, light metals, film and so on. There have been strategic investments in those areas that are necessary. If we simply go down the path of repeating the approach of the present, we will wind up in the parlous state that the coalition wound up in with unemployment of 9.5 per cent in the February-March 1997 period. I am sure none of us want to go back to those bad old days.

Mr LINGARD: Quite obviously there has been a breakdown between the government and employers. You are continually referring to new schemes—I admit to that—but we continually find that the unemployment rate is not decreasing. Can you give consideration to an employment crisis summit of business leaders, both small and large, employee representatives and experts in employment creation in order to address the Queensland's growing unemployment? In other words, will you sit down with employers to find out what is exactly going wrong with all of these apprenticeship schemes such that we find that only 50 per cent are getting permanent employment at the end of them? Would you look at an employment summit?

Mr FOLEY: We work closely with employers on a regular basis. You may not be aware of the existence of what is in effect a permanent employment summit. It is called the Training and Employment Board and it is a statutory body established under the Training and Employment Act introduced by my predecessor, the Honourable Paul Braddy, who I must say I believe did a very fine job in this portfolio. In August last year the Premier hosted the sustainable jobs summit. That was part of an initiative to underpin the government's commitment to key outcomes of jobs and environmental protection. So the Premier did that last year.

In terms of getting ongoing structures in place to make sure we do get the benefit of what employers think and their experience and what trade union people think, we have established a body called the Training and Employment Board under the Training and Employment Act. That body in fact has a key role in the preparation of the state training profile, which is the expenditure of moneys that comes before this committee, through representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and along with representatives of the trade union movement. That body plays a key role in the formulation of the vocational education and training profile at a very senior level. That Employment and Training Board, which has now been given

statutory force by the Training and Employment Act, enables the input of employers at a peak level to be obtained.

We need to get that input not just at a peak level but also at a local and regional level. That is one of the reasons employers sit together with trade union people and local government people in committees at the various regions of the department when they come to assess community jobs programs, community employment assistance programs and community training partnerships. The idea to which you refer is a laudable one. That is why the Premier did it, that is why Paul Braddy introduced the legislation and that is why we have committees working at the local level as well.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for non-government members' questions has expired. I call the member for Woodridge.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: Minister, it is important that the department has constructive relations with private training providers and TAFE facilities and that training providers maintain high levels of accountability. What measures have you taken to improve relationships and cooperation within the training sector?

Mr FOLEY: It is absolutely important that a person going along to get training can be satisfied that there are proper standards. We do not want shonks in the training industry; we want providers that the ordinary person, the job seeker, the student can rely on. That is why the quality and effectiveness of the provision of training is important. The department has commenced implementation of a program to establish a proactive contract management relationship and an informed audit model. This means regular contact between registered training organisations and their contract managers to help build a real partnership between the department and registered training organisations. It does not just mean coming along with the big stick at the end of the process; it is about improved communication—two-way communication—with the contract managers and their training providers to resolve minor issues before they become major problems. The new arrangements are also designed to support better business planning and forecasts of anticipated delivery.

As well as the managers' assistance, contracted registered training organisations will also receive free from the department a fully customised business planning software package. The software will save registered training organisations significant time preparing business plans and enable them to better market their services. The Training Recognition Council is the body that has the statutory authority under the legislation to which I referred that Paul Braddy brought in last year. That has the power to recognise training providers, and it also has the power to strike them off. But it is important that we do not just adopt a pure policing model. This is about nurturing the industry. It is about ensuring high standards. It is about world's best practice. That is why the department essentially has been trying to engage in better dialogue and in better systems of communication—better two-way communication—so that we do maintain high levels of accountability. Every now and again somebody has to be struck off, and that is the bottom line. But we want to ensure that these problems are nipped in the bud before they get to that stage.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: Page 17 refers to the Youth Access Program and its role in assisting school leavers at risk of unemployment. Can the minister outline the 2001-02 plans for this initiative and how schools can work with the department to improve employment opportunities for at-risk youth?

Mr FOLEY: I welcome the honourable member's interest in it. I am mindful of the fact that the member for Woodridge and I visited a number of youths the other day

down in Logan City. I thank the honourable member for her keen interest in it. We spoke of the challenge of unemployment as the top priority, and that is true. But an area that causes me increasing concern, and an area that requires enormous attention, is this problem of young people who are at risk because they fall in the gap between school and the workplace. We have to do better in that area. We have to reach out to those young people. We have to look at the way our TAFE colleges work and our training programs work. There is absolutely no room for complacency. I know that the Minister for Education is working hard in that area. I had the pleasure of visiting with you to Kingston College, which appears to be doing excellent work to assist young people. It is significant that there has been progress. Over half of Queensland's year 11 and 12 students—54 per cent—are enrolled in vocational education and training in schools in a program, and 95 per cent of Queensland's secondary schools provide vocational education and training opportunities for their students.

School-based apprenticeships and traineeships are becoming increasing popular with our senior students. Since that commenced in 1997, over 5,000 Queensland school students have commenced a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship. For example, in my own electorate youngsters from the Nyanda State High School will do four days a week there and then one day a week, for example, in a traineeship in office administration at a local panel beater at Acacia Ridge or thereabouts. In that way the gap between school and the workplace can be bridged and those young people can get a transition. Indeed, Queensland leads the nation in this area, with 55 per cent of the total number of students commencing school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. Victoria comes second, and they have 2,000 fewer than Queensland.

So that having been said, there is no room for complacency. The government will invest \$5 million over the next three years to expand that program. This is designed to provide an opportunity for more than 10,500 students to start an apprenticeship or traineeship while at school. The Youth Access Program will also target students at risk of leaving school early because of difficulties that they face.

Mr RODGERS: Minister, will the government still assist business in Queensland, particularly in the Burdekin region, to employ young people in apprenticeships and traineeships with ongoing financial assistance to employers to put on young people?

Mr FOLEY: The short answer is yes, we certainly will. I welcome the member's interest in that. Having been in the Burdekin just a day or two ago and having met with the young people there at the Australian College of Tropical Agriculture, the former Burdekin Agricultural College, I am mindful of the honourable member's keen interest in the provision of training opportunities for young people.

Since the initiative began in October 1998, the region has received just under \$48 million to provide 5,919 people with jobs in training places. Up until 10 July this year, the initiative had helped 208 persons in the Burdekin to get jobs. As I indicated before, this initiative achieved its four-year target 18 months ahead of schedule. And for this financial year some \$2.43 million has been allocated to the north Queensland region under the Community Jobs Plan and Community Employment Assistance Program to create a further 477 employment and training opportunities for long-term unemployed people.

I am happy to say that as at 10 July, 56 private sector employers and three group training organisations had received payment totalling \$176,000 for employing 100 additional apprentices and trainees in the Burdekin. Employers in

the north Queensland region are likely to receive payments totalling around \$718,000 in cash incentives for employing 462 extra trainees and apprentices under this part of the initiative in 2001-02.

The government is playing its part. As at 10 July, public sector agencies within the Burdekin received funding totalling just over \$2.6 million for employing 88 additional trainees and 20 apprentices. So the public sector has a role. The private sector has a role. In just over two and a half years, private sector employers and group training organisations have employed 10,430 apprentices and trainees, well above the targeted 7,500 additional jobs.

I might just say that I was very pleased to meet some of those young people at the Burdekin Ag. College, or the Australian College of Tropical Agriculture. They are engaged in activities from which we might learn something, because the training system in those colleges is very heavily focused on job outcomes.

Mr RODGERS: Minister, the Burdekin TAFE college has lost some of its educational classes in traditional manufacturing based subjects. Will the government's funding for TAFE colleges help revitalise the TAFE system, in particular the Burdekin TAFE college?

Mr FOLEY: Yes, the Burdekin college has a total increase in scheduled delivery of manufacturing based courses hours from 42,031 student contact hours actually delivered in 2000-01 to 45,300 student contact hours planned for delivery in 2001-02. The government has allocated a record \$538.8 million for TAFE Queensland in this budget—the 2001-02 budget. The Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE's budget allocation for 2001-02 is \$32,247,300, compared to \$31,357,600 in 2000-01.

The Burdekin TAFE college has a positive future. It plays an important role, and we want to ensure that people all over this state can get access to vocational education and training. I know an important issue with young people in that area—two of the young people whom I met who received youth participation grants, Natalie and Travis—Travis is organising a forum in the coming months on youth issues in that area. Obviously employment is a key issue. I was very impressed with the young people whom I met in that area. They are willing to speak up for themselves. And both there and in a youth arts cultural workshop that I visited there I was pleased to see them taking an active part in having a say. For our part, the government believes that it is important for these services to be widespread in regional Queensland. We want to ensure that places like the Burdekin TAFE college are accessible to people and help deliver quality vocational education and training.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: Minister, the MPS informs us that the Logan Employment Task Force has been successful. Please provide details of how it has been successful and how the plans to roll out similar models in Caboolture, Ipswich and Mount Morgan have progressed.

Mr FOLEY: The Logan Employment Task Force has indeed been successful, and that is good to see. One of the things we have to do—and it comes back to a point that Mr Lingard very correctly and properly made, if I might respectfully say so—is we have to get employers involved. That means not just at the senior level but also at the local level. This Employment Task Force is chaired by the Logan City Council. It has membership including a range of local organisations that have a stake in employment. I was very pleased to meet with you and the Logan City Council and to note their keen interest in it. It is remarkable sometimes when you visit places and discover that parties who have a common interest in employment

are not actually talking with each other. But that was not the case in Logan because of the leadership shown by local organisations.

Community organisations such as BoysTown are working with the council and a host of state agencies to give a real focus on job creation in the Logan area. To give these efforts support on the ground, the task force employed an employment development officer to coordinate activities of the task force and to drive several key projects. A survey of some 600 local businesses was carried out to ascertain employment opportunities and skills needs. That information assisted the implementation of a Community Training Partnerships Program that was sponsored by Logan City Council.

The task force has recently developed a 2001 strategic plan which will provide a clear direction for ongoing job creation activities in Logan City, and plans to establish similar models in Caboolture, Ipswich and Mount Morgan have been progressed with local arrangements put in place. This is very good. Each of those areas has its own problems and opportunities, and we need to get the opportunities to match up with the problems.

For example, the task force in Caboolture is playing an important role in the successful 1,000 Jobs in 1,000 Days campaign being conducted in Caboolture. The Ipswich Employment Task Force is establishing a forum to showcase and gain support for the range of employment and related issues being undertaken in the Ipswich area. And the Mount Morgan Employment Task Force is providing a key focus for the development of a number of employment and job training projects that will assist local job seekers, including in that area in the cultural tourism sector, which is a very important sector for Mount Morgan. I was very pleased to see the active involvement of the council and the local community in it.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: The government has a vision for Queensland as the Smart State. Please provide details of the initiatives undertaken by your department to address the Smart State initiative, including advising the committee of the number of places that will be made available within TAFE for studying information technology courses.

Mr FOLEY: This is pretty fundamental if we want to have a growing economy in the short, medium and long term. TAFE has an absolutely key role in innovation and technology. In fact, one of the really disappointing things about the Prime Minister's innovation statement was that he did not actually refer to the vocational education and training sector at all. He referred understandably to the university sector and so on, and I welcome his interest in that area, but I was flabbergasted that there was absolutely no reference by the Prime Minister to this area of innovation.

During 2001-02, approximately \$33 million in information technology, or in IT&T training, is planned for delivery to Queenslanders through the VET system. This figure is almost double that delivered in 1998 and represents an average annual increase in expenditure of approximately 25 per cent since 1998. In addition to this investment, incentive payments of up to \$2,200 are available to employers for the additional IT&T trainees that they employ. This incentive, which is part of our Breaking the Unemployment Cycle, encourages the employment of trainees in the identified skills shortage areas.

Significant investments in IT&T training infrastructure are also being made. In 2001-02 approximately \$13.7 million will be expended on the development of TAFE online training delivery systems, network and desktop hardware and training product development. Existing information and communication technology

infrastructure into the regions of Queensland will be expanded at a cost of \$1.25 million and the development of a modern network platform for the four Queensland agricultural colleges will continue at a cost of \$4 million.

Employment in the computer services industry represents about 1.1 per cent of Queensland's employment but it accounts for 6.5 per cent of Queensland's employment growth over the five years ended August 2000, which comes back to my earlier point that it is not good enough just to generate economic growth; what we have to do is to target those areas where there will be employment growth. Obviously, information technology and telecommunications is one of those areas along with film, biotechnology and so on. So the majority of that training will be delivered through TAFE.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for government questions has expired. I call the member for Tablelands.

Mr FOLEY: I am sorry to interrupt. I think that I misstated the cost for the agricultural colleges. I think I said \$4 million; it should be \$1 million.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Minister.

Ms LEE LONG: Minister, how is the TAFE sector comparing to the non-TAFE sector in user-choice audits and the Australian Quality Training Framework audits?

Mr FOLEY: I will just get you those details. Basically, whether they are TAFE or whether they are private training providers, they have to meet basic standards and ensure that they comply. What we find is that when compliance audits are done, they reveal problems across-the-board both in the private sector and in the public sector. No-one is immune from those. As I indicated earlier, we are trying to do better so that we are not just, as it were, policing them but we are trying to ensure that there is better dialogue.

The department confirms that it is a common audit process for TAFE and for the other providers, because through the Training Recognition Council it is provided that everybody has to come up to a certain standard. The new Australian Quality Training Framework endorsed on 8 June improves the clarity and vigour of the standards. It applies to private and public providers and it applies to registering authorities as well.

So the TAFE institutes participate in an ongoing integrated audit program. It is comprehensive. It covers every aspect of the business of an institute. As an additional measure to ensure quality, institutes may be measured using the more traditional compliance audit model. TAFE providers and private providers both have to meet certain standards. Obviously, in addition, TAFE institutes, because they are public providers, are subject to internal audit and external scrutiny by the Queensland Audit Office as well. We need to ensure that, whether a student is attending TAFE or attending a private provider, they can be assured that the fundamental standards of training quality are upheld.

In this year's budget, the department has committed the resources of the training quality and regulation group to undertake some 380 audits of private training organisations across Queensland, including 280 against the Australian Quality Training Framework and 100 with user choice and competitive purchasing program contracts.

Ms LEE LONG: Thank you. How successful has workplace-based training been in comparison to classroom-based training in TAFE institutions?

Mr FOLEY: It is a case of horses for courses. In some areas, work-based training is highly relevant and absolutely what one needs. Obviously, in some other areas there is a need for class-based training. Let me give you some examples. For some years in the building industry we have been trying to ensure that what is done in the classroom and what happens on the building site are closely linked, because if you take apprentices out for a block period there is a danger that they might forget or lose the skills by the time they go back. So there are some important initiatives that have happened there. For example, I remember visiting a training program in Rockhampton where TAFE actually brought the trainer on site and did the classroom work in a donga on the building site. So, as it were, they learn the theory of how you hang a door with vertical alignment and so on and then have to go out and actually hang the door, which I am told is a very good learning experience. I have never been able to hang a door successfully myself.

I think that it is fair to say that there has been a shift over the past 10 years from TAFE being rather like a school to TAFE being more like a workplace, and that is important in terms of servicing industry needs. The only thing is that we have to be a bit careful that we do not abandon our caring role in vocational education for these kids who are falling between school and the workplace. We have to make sure that we reach out to them. For example, the groups down the Gold Coast whom I saw, who were kids at risk—young people at risk—really needed access to TAFE in a quasi-school setting so that they had access to a computer and support staff. But it is clear that employers want flexibility, and meeting the needs of employers and workplace-based training is a very important direction. We need to ensure that we tailor the relevant training appropriately for the situation.

Ms LEE LONG: Thank you. How successful has the apprenticeship trainee system been? Is it a fact that there have been problems in indigenous communities with apprentices or trainees failing to meet their commitments?

Mr FOLEY: There are problems in all apprenticeships and traineeships in regard to ensuring that the apprenticeship is carried out successfully. Whether it is the training on the job provided by an employer, whether it is the attendance by the apprentice, there are a range of issues.

In the area of indigenous apprentices and trainees, I think that there are some important, positive developments. Earlier, I mentioned my visiting Palm Island. One of the most optimistic experiences that I have had in recent times was being shown by the indigenous apprentices, some of whom I think were in their 30s and one of whom may have been in his 40s, the work that they had done to extend a building next to the classroom. We had to walk through the classroom. The teacher incidentally asked the students what they wanted to do when they grew up. I was fascinated to hear one of the students say, 'I want to be a builder like'—and I will call him John; that was not his name, I do not think—'John,' who was being a role model. He was an indigenous man in his 30s undertaking this apprenticeship and he was a role model for those students.

I think that we have learned some lessons as to better ways of approaching that. That is why we have indigenous employment and training support officers based in Aurukun, Palm Island, the far-northern peninsula, the greater Cooktown area, Pormpuraaw, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Woorabinda, the Ipswich-Beenleigh corridor and Hervey Bay. Under the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle, some 3,808 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have obtained apprenticeships, traineeships, job placement and training assistance. We have piloted this mentoring and support program called the Indigenous Employment and Training Support

Officer Program. Nine positions, as I say, have been funded in community-based organisations across Queensland. The indigenous employment policy has been implemented. That policy requires that 20 per cent of the labour hours of construction projects on a local indigenous community are based on employment of people from that local indigenous community. In the Palm Island example that I mentioned, people were working on the building of some extensions to the women's shelter. Of that 20 per cent, half have to be in an approved structured training program. So we have made some progress in that area and I commend those Aboriginal and Islander communities for their support for that.

The CHAIRMAN: The hearing is now suspended for morning tea.

Sitting suspended from 9.58 a.m. to 10.07 a.m.

The CHAIRMAN: The hearing of Estimates Committee F is now resumed. I call the member for Tablelands.

Ms LEE LONG: There is a lot of reliance at present on job apprenticeships and traineeships in the building industry. What will happen after the federal first home buyers incentives cease, given that many small businesses have already got their shutters halfway down?

Mr FOLEY: The member for Tablelands has identified a very serious issue. For many small businesses, the impact of the GST and the impact of the business activity statement have been ruinous. That has certainly been the case for many in the building industry. Weighed against that, it is pleasing to note that there have been some signs of recovery there. Early indications are of a recovery in the building industry.

There are a number of problems with this industry. It has been an industry classically subject to boom and bust. When things are going well, projects cannot get a skilled tradesperson for love or money. When things are in bust, nobody wants to put on an apprentice, so it becomes a vicious cycle.

In order to smooth that out a bit, to get a more rational approach to it and to try to provide some assistance during times when, as you very correctly say, people are doing it tough, we introduced a scheme that had a proportion of funds channelled into training. We amended the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act to make funds available to create the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund. It is a bit of a mouthful, but it is a very important fund to provide training. It provides approximately \$6 million annually and it is administered by Construction Training Queensland, the industry training advisory body, on behalf of a board of trustees.

That fund has contributed to the employment of over 1,650 additional apprentices and trainees. It is expected that over four financial years commencing 1998-99, up to 3,000 additional apprenticeship and traineeship employment opportunities will be created in the building and construction industry as a result of the fund. As at 31 May this year, the fund has provided incentive payments to the employers of 648 apprentices and trainees against a target of 703 for the full financial year.

I guess what I would say to any prospective employer in the building industry is, 'Come and see my department.' In fact, one of the things that I was most proud of this department for is that back in 1993-94 when there was a boom in building industry in the Cairns region, builders would come in to complain to the department that there were not enough skilled tradespeople. By the time they got out of the

department, they had signed up half a dozen apprentices and were on three training committees. My department is ready, willing and able to provide assistance to anyone who would like to put on an apprentice or trainee in that industry.

Mr LINGARD: Minister, you make a lot of the words 'apprenticeships' and 'traineeships', but your budget figures show that there were 10,500 traineeships going to be projected over the next three years. Your documents also show, page 1-19, that 50 per cent of those kids do not get through. Of 10,500, there are 5,250 who do not make the end of their traineeships. Surely that is a reflection on your department?

Mr FOLEY: With great respect, I do not—

Mr LINGARD: Certainly on page 1-17 you refer to 10,500 commencements over the next three years.

Mr FOLEY: Sure, but let us take it step by step.

Mr LINGARD: Certainly on page 1-19 you talk about a 50 per cent failure. That is 5,250.

Mr FOLEY: I do not accept that it is a reflection on the department. I think it is a very fine department that does a very fine job. It is true that the completion rate for apprentices is about 56 per cent. For trainees it is about 60 per cent. What inference do we draw from that? Do we draw the inference that it is a shocking waste of time because almost half do not complete their apprenticeship and almost 40 per cent do not complete their traineeship? I am not sure that we should necessarily draw that conclusion.

We would like to see everyone who starts an apprenticeship or traineeship complete it. However, keep in mind that apprenticeships go over a number of years. The fact that somebody does not complete his or her apprenticeship does not necessarily mean that they are unemployed. They may have picked up sufficient skills that enable them to obtain employment in another way and in another area.

We encourage ways and means of improving completion rates. One of the most practical ways of doing that is explaining to people right up front what their duties and obligations are for the employer and the employee. In fact, I convened a workshop forum with a whole group of young people who were doing apprenticeships and traineeships to get some feedback about this very issue. One of things that they stressed to me was the need to spell it out at the start. Since the first election of the Beattie government in 1998, 114,636 apprentices and trainees have commenced training. This means that over 3,184 apprentices and trainees have commenced each month, compared with some 2,334 under the previous government.

What we want to see is completions where possible, but the fact of the matter is that many of those you need to tackle in a different way. That is one of the reasons why we have gone in for school-based apprenticeships and traineeships which allow for a more regulated introduction from school to the workplace. There have been studies undertaken by Professor Cullen of the University of Queensland and the National Centre for Vocational Educational Research into non-completions. They have indicated that people who have had some experience in apprenticeships or traineeships are more likely to still be in employment than those who have not had that experience.

Mr LINGARD: I would have liked to have continued with the role of registered training authorities, because I feel as though the department is not checking on their work enough, but I have not got time. I would also refer to your comments about the

Building and Construction Industry Training Fund. Page 1-12 of your budget documents shows that your target was 980 jobs and your estimated actual was 703. In other words, you dropped 280 jobs from what you intended to do with the training fund. The last footnote on that page says that the numbers achieved are dependent on moneys available from the training fund. So you have dropped 280 and now you are projecting 755. You started off with 980, you dropped to 703 because you could not complete it and now you will not go anywhere near 980. You will only go to 755.

Mr FOLEY: With respect, Mr Lingard, it is the very point that the member for Tablelands made. The reason that there was a drop in training in the building industry is that that industry was hit for six by the GST and by the business activity statement. It also follows from that that, if you have fewer building projects, then the fund which is a percentage of those building projects is thereby reduced. That is not the fault of the fund and it is certainly not the fault of the department. It is a direct consequence of the people working in that industry having been slugged by the GST. I am reinforced in that view by the fact that the Commonwealth government itself saw the error of its ways and introduced the provision about the first home owners grant. That fund operates on a percentage of the building projects in the same way that the provisions of the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act work.

⁰⁰⁸ For my part, I think it has been one of the most significant reforms to training during the time that I have had the honour to serve. How else do we get that industry to start to think strategically about its training needs? It is an industry which is notorious for going in, going out and not planning for the future. What this was all about was an attempt by some far-sighted people in the union movement and amongst employers to say, 'Look, we have got to have a better strategy, a better paradigm. We need to set some funds aside.' There was anxiety about that initially lest it contribute to overall costs. That anxiety has not been realised. I think it is doing a good job in the face of what was a savage blow to the building industry.

I am informed that the Housing Institute of Australia, which no-one could describe as a mouthpiece for the Australian Labor Party, estimated 60,000 job losses nationally since 1 July 2000. That has consequences. If such an impact is made on the building and construction industry, it flows on to the fund and it flows on to apprenticeships and traineeships.

Mr LINGARD: Can I switch to TAFE—and I have no doubt that you are ready for the question. I note in the answer to the question on notice you have advised that there is no provision in the current budget for improved TAFE tutor salaries other than the general public service certified agreement. I am advised by the industry that tutor salaries are around the Public Service AO2 level, yet tutors are required to have one qualification at least equivalent to the discipline they are tutoring in, plus a certificate in workplace training, plus industry experience. As I have been informed, TAFE institutes have a policy of not increasing permanent teacher numbers, yet many are employing qualified teachers as tutors. Could you explain the justification for this stand when tutors are effectively now being employed as cheap teachers?

Mr FOLEY: The short answer is that these industrial issues were dealt with in the enterprise bargaining agreement. That agreement made those provisions, and the staff and the unions accepted those provisions during the course of the life of the enterprise bargaining agreement. As a former Minister for Industrial Relations—and I am sure all members of the committee appreciate this—there are always many points of view on industrial matters. As an employer, we have a responsibility to listen to our employees and to attend to their concerns and the concerns of their

unions. I think the short answer is that those matters were dealt with in the enterprise bargaining agreement. And that, as the name suggests, was the subject of an agreement.

Mr LINGARD: I have a general question about agricultural colleges. Has the funding for agricultural colleges kept pace with inflation over the past five years? There is a concern about meeting the administrative requirements of the Australian Recognition Framework. This has significantly increased the overheads for training providers. So can I ask you about the funding for agricultural colleges and also the future of some of those agricultural colleges in central Queensland?

Mr FOLEY: The agricultural colleges perform an important role. As I mentioned to the member for Burdekin, I had the pleasure of being out early in the morning on Monday up at the Burdekin ag college or, more properly called, the Australian College of Tropical Agriculture. In fact, the board put to me a program for the revitalisation of that college. I think, broadly speaking, they are on the right track. I had a number of suggestions to them about industry support, about a commitment to social justice outcomes, about pastoral care for the students there and so on. But I was impressed by the fact that they were looking at a commercial focus, at getting their house in order and revitalising the college in its dealings with in particular the sugar industry and the cattle industry. I am just getting those details over the last five years. I do not have that immediately to hand.

As to the other colleges—Emerald, Dalby and Longreach—there are specific issues to do with each college, but I think it is true to say that those colleges play an important role in servicing the needs of industry. In fact, in some respects we can learn from them. Because they are so closely tied up with industry and are so practically focused they provide a real opportunity for young people to connect into a structured training program in a way that they can see a result. Up at the Burdekin there were a number of young people on short courses. There were a number of young people there who were doing them instead of grades 11 and 12. That is not something that would work in the city, but it services their needs.

I am informed that the agricultural college's budget for this year is \$13.29 million and that this budget has increased with inflation every year. I made reference earlier to an investment that we are making in information technology training for those colleges. I think it is in the order of \$1 million or so.

I think the message, though, for agricultural colleges is this: nothing stays the same. When they were set up, in the case of the Burdekin 25 years ago, they filled an important role, but the growth—

Mr LINGARD: I would have liked to ask you whether you are going to close any annexes there or whether you could give a guarantee to those people. Perhaps you might comment on that. I would also like to ask a question on behalf of the shadow Minister for Youth before we switch to Arts. In response to question on notice No. 8 with regard to the five-year strategic plan for the prevention of youth suicide, you detailed that the funding for this financial year was \$50,000. Could you please specify how that funding is to be allocated and also whether this is the total funding for the prevention of youth suicide across the whole of government?

Mr FOLEY: No, it is not. There are a number of other departments and agencies that are involved in that. The lead agency is, I think, Queensland Health and, obviously, a range of other agencies such as Family Services and so on. The work that is done there is obviously by the Office of Youth Affairs. Let me give an example. Just a couple of months ago I attended at a forum-cum-workshop at

Yungaba at Kangaroo Point where the relevant officer from the Office of Youth Affairs who is working in that area was networking and informing all of those other youth workers so that they were kept in the loop. This is a small part of a whole-of-government approach. The Beattie government has allocated \$2 million in 2000-01. I will just see what it is for this year. Basically, the lion's share of it goes to Families, to Education and to the Health Department. The Office of Youth Affairs communicates with youth workers and tries to make sure that they are properly informed so that they are kept in the loop.

This does require a response right across government departments. It is a huge issue. It is tragic, far reaching and complex. I am informed that that \$50,000 does not include the salary costs of the officers working on it. It is in the order of \$2 million across government. The strategy aims to prevent deliberate self-harming behaviour. Needless to say, it is a very difficult area. But it is one where the Office of Youth Affairs tries to engage with youth workers who in turn engage with their communities in a way which is positive and which does not, as it were, harp on the negative and thereby engender the very evil that we seek to prevent. Their work, though, is important in keeping the youth sector fully and properly informed about what the government as a whole is trying to do, which is largely a responsibility of Health, Families and Education.

Mr LESTER: I refer the minister to the fact that the Capricorn Coast is growing by approximately 1,300 people per annum. By the year 2020 we will have in excess of 40,000 people. The area is vibrant. I refer to the subsidiary of Rockhampton TAFE. The buildings are old and not conducive to good learning. I would like to know if there is some way that we can enhance in the area the presence of TAFE and perhaps link in with the University of Central Queensland better and promote what we are about there just generally to uplift the presence. Transport also is a problem for people getting into Rockhampton and is the subject of a number of concerns that are raised with me. I ask this as a general question to see if we can give it a bit more impetus.

Mr FOLEY: I thank you very much for the question. We certainly want to ensure that training services are available to people throughout regional Queensland, including in the Capricornia region. There is no proposal before government for abandoning any services or facilities that are available there. Indeed, I might say that in terms of the labour market programs and community jobs programs, under Breaking the Unemployment Cycle there are some 160 people in the electorate of Keppel who have received jobs. We support things like three Community Jobs Plan projects to employ 32 long-term unemployed persons on the redevelopment of the old Uniting Church in Yeppoon, the upgrading of the facilities at the Yeppoon Golf Club and improving the equity access to various facilities in the township of Emu Park. Those funds are in the order of \$392,780. That is about reaching out and trying to make sure that we help people.

So far as training is concerned, some 55 private sector employers and three group training organisations have received payments totalling \$132,000 for employing 79 additional apprentices and trainees in Keppel. The government, for its part, is doing what it can. As at 10 July this year public sector agencies within Keppel received funding totalling \$798,000 for employing 48 additional trainees and one additional apprentice. They are practical examples of trying to provide assistance to people whom you represent.

In the central Queensland region at Rocky there is \$678,000 in this budget for the TAFE to complete the finalisation of accounts for the new engineering facility at

Canning Street in Rockhampton. That engineering facility was officially opened on 5 January. The completion of the consolidation project will end a three-year program of major works in Rockhampton. Those works helped to position that institute as a regional leader in the delivery of vocational education and training.

Mr LESTER: That is fine. Thank you for that answer. A lot of that answer referred to Rockhampton, and that is fine. In some of these statistics you were talking about you mentioned the electorate of Keppel. Almost half of the population of the electorate of Keppel is outside of Rockhampton. A lot of our concern is actually on the Capricorn Coast. It is just impossible to provide the transport systems we need because of the diversity of times and whatever. I just suggest to you without really pursuing the issue in a big way that you might be kind enough to come up at some point and meet with some of the people. There are a lot of very wonderful people training there and doing the job as teachers, tutors and whatever. It is a pretty good little effort, but we just need a bit of a facelift and a bit more recognition for the Capricorn Coast. We tend to get swallowed up by Rockhampton a little bit. That goes across all governments. I am not necessarily having a go at anybody. It comes into health as well. We need a bit more identity on the Capricorn Coast.

Mr FOLEY: I am delighted to accept your invitation. I look forward to attending there. I did attend there during my last term of office in this portfolio.

Mr LESTER: Yes, and I was there.

Mr FOLEY: My dad grew up at Cawarral so I have a soft spot for that area. I want to ensure that kids growing up there have better access to education and training than my dad probably did when he grew up there. He had to catch the rattler into Rocky every day. Hopefully we can do a bit better for the kids of today.

The CHAIRMAN: We are now moving to Arts Queensland. We will begin with government questions. I might just give you a minute to change the guards, so to speak.

Mr FOLEY: I just want to take the opportunity to specifically thank the officers of the Department of Employment and Training and the Office of Youth Affairs for their assistance in the preparation of material to assist the committee in its work.

The CHAIRMAN: We will now resume with Arts Queensland. We will begin with government questions. Can you explain what initiatives you are putting in place to ensure that Queensland's indigenous artists are receiving training opportunities?

Mr FOLEY: We are making a significant attempt to address training opportunities for indigenous artists and, in particular, those which will lead to job outcomes. There is a major initiative of which I can inform the committee that will lead to an exhibition at the Queensland Art Gallery of the artists from Cape York Peninsula in 2003. This initiative brings together the work of Arts Queensland and the work of the Department of Employment and Training. It will be a new, groundbreaking art exhibition showcasing the work of indigenous artists of Cape York Peninsula for the first time. It will provide opportunities for training and employment. The Indigenous Art of Cape York Exhibition will bring the art of Cape York to national and international attention.

There has been a lot of international attention on the western desert region and Arnhem Land, but so far the world has not really discovered the fantastic artworks of Cape York Peninsula. The Department of Employment and Training committed \$280,000 over two years to support 10 trainees and a trainee coordinator to the Queensland Art Gallery to assist in the development of the exhibition. It will bring

the rich culture and continuing traditions of Aboriginal people of that region to the rest of the country. It will emphasise the strong traditions of the cape through artworks collected at the end of the 19th century, the middle of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.

The three main cultural regions within Cape York Peninsula will be explored in the exhibition, that is the western cape, the east cape and the rainforest. It will cover an area from the tip of Cape York to Townsville. The exhibition will incorporate a range of works such as sculptures from Aurukun, shields and baskets from the rainforest region and work by contemporary artists from the Lockhart River. The major focus of the work is to recruit and train indigenous people in arts administration and other aspects of the project, in other words, to assist in creating an arts administration base that will ensure that Aboriginal communities get a long-term benefit from this exercise.

The other area of significant effort is to do with the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts. This is an important centre and I pay credit to the former Arts Minister, Mrs Sheldon, for her initiative in setting it up. There will be an additional \$200,000 per annum provided to the centre to assist in building that organisation's training capacity on top of the \$350,000 which Arts Queensland provides. It is about jobs in the arts industry.

Mr RODGERS: Libraries in Queensland are essential to providing Queenslanders with access to information, knowledge and technology. Can you advise what measures have been put in place to ensure that indigenous communities have the same access to library services as those of non-indigenous communities?

Mr FOLEY: We are trying to give indigenous communities a fair go, and that has meant a change in the funding formula. Over recent years it became apparent that our funding formula in the funding of regional libraries had something fundamentally wrong with it. We funded communities with libraries but we did not fund communities without libraries. The irony of that is pretty hard to miss. Those communities that are without libraries are, by and large, indigenous communities. So we needed to ensure that the funding of \$18 million or \$19 million which goes each year to regional libraries actually reached out to the people most in need. We made provision for \$1 million per annum over three years to ensure that Aboriginal and Islander people would get access to that information.

Although there are 35 indigenous communities in Queensland, it is an open scandal that only seven communities have access to a library and information service, namely, Cherbourg, Kowanyama, Moa Island, Mornington Island, Palm Island, Thursday Island and Yarrabah. Plans are under way to establish new library services in Bamaga, Yorke Island, Hammond Island, Sue Island, Horn Island and Darnley Island. Just last week I visited Cherbourg and had the great honour of opening the Winifred Fisher community library, which is based at the Cherbourg State School. It was a very happy occasion because the people of that community, like any community, should be entitled to have a library which the rest of us just take for granted.

Last October I participated in the launch of the indigenous library services charter in Yarrabah, and this charter documents a forward plan. I pay tribute to the work of the library board, in particular the chair, Erik Finger, and to the State Librarian, Des Stephens, for their dedication in this area. Through their efforts a number of important initiatives have been taken. In March this year I launched the information package entitled *Library Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait*

Islander People, which is prepared by the Indigenous Libraries Unit of the Public Libraries Division. It is important that we address this issue. People in those communities should be entitled to access to library services just like people in other communities.

Mr RODGERS: Can you provide details of the government's support for regional museums and can you tell us the role that Queensland museums play in servicing this sector?

Mr FOLEY: Yes, the Queensland Museum is going through a very important phase of expansion and increasing its accessibility to regional Queensland. The Queensland Museum is a museum for the whole of Queensland. Its network spans the whole state, including the Cobb & Co. Museum at Toowoomba; the Museum of Tropical Queensland in Townsville; Gympie's woodworks, forestry and timber museum, the Museum of North Western Queensland at Mount Isa; and the display centre at Glenlyon Dam. Queensland museums have received an increase of \$2.6 million in recurrent funding since 1996-97, bringing the total Queensland government allocation to \$13.2 million in 2001-02.

Several years ago we undertook a process which resulted in a hidden heritage policy. That told us that much of Queensland's heritage is not to be found in the museum in Brisbane but is hidden in a whole lot of small museums throughout the state. It is one of the reasons why we have invested heavily in the expansion of the museum. For example, there is the \$17.5 million for the expansion of the museum in Townsville which includes, of course, the fabulous Pandora exhibition; and \$20 million has been allocated to the Ipswich Railway Workshops, with a further \$1.7 million over two years for the operating costs of a new rail museum. I attended there with the workers. The people of Ipswich do not need any convincing that access to a museum in their town is a very important priority.

⁰¹⁰ The Cobb & Co. Museum in Toowoomba has received \$2 million through the Queensland Heritage Trails Network for its stage 2 expansion, which will open in October this year. When I met with officers of that museum recently it was driven home to me just how important it is that the museum gets out and about. It was in contact with a group of Aboriginal people who had a very significant site not far from Toowoomba who were interested in developing perhaps an interpretive centre next to that very significant site.

What is happening is very significant in the area of museums. In particular, the Queensland Museum has had a significant growth in Townsville. It is experiencing a massive growth in Ipswich and a modest growth at the Cobb & Co. Museum in Toowoomba. Over and above that, there is \$110 million of joint Commonwealth-state initiatives in the regions, including things like the Kronosaurus Corner in Richmond which sets out the history of the ancient marine dinosaurs of the inland sea. These things are very important if we want the Queensland Museum to be a museum for the whole of Queensland.

Mr FENLON: One of the future developments to be undertaken by Arts Queensland is to provide replacement rehearsal and administration facilities for the Queensland Theatre Company. Can you please provide the committee with information about this project.

Mr FOLEY: It is going to be a fantastic home for the Queensland Theatre Company. I attended the other day with the chair of the Queensland Theatre Company and the administrative officer of the Theatre Company to announce the new home of the Queensland Theatre Company in what was the Evans Deakin

building in West End. That home has been purchased and a \$3.5 million refurbishment will be undertaken. This will mean that administrative functions have been separated from wardrobe, workshop and rehearsal facilities, which lead to less than efficient practice. Artists and creative staff had to travel between rehearsals, wardrobe and scenery workshops, which added to cost and meant less time spent creating productions.

I well remember doing rehearsals for the Queensland Theatre Company when I was lucky enough to be engaged by it in 1973 for two productions. We had to rehearse in a small church hall in Kangaroo Point. I look back on those days and what the actors and directors had to make do with. I was absolutely overjoyed to be with the Queensland Theatre Company visiting what will be a very fine new home for it. This reflects a deep commitment that I believe the Queensland Theatre Company has made to the arts and culture of this state. You see that in its regional contacts with Cairns, Townsville, Toowoomba and right throughout the state. You see it in its commitment to Queensland writing, including the very confronting but very powerful Queensland plays that were performed at the Cremorne recently under the heading *Dirt*. I think this will be a landmark in the history of theatre in this state. It is a part of the Millennium Arts Project that the government committed to. The establishment of the new home for the Queensland Theatre Company reflects its own artistic commitment to the state.

Mr FENLON: The Queensland Biennial Festival of Music commences in the next couple of days. Can you please explain how this festival has built upon earlier festivals and how many jobs the 2001 festival will create.

Mr FOLEY: Yes. On Friday morning I shall be in Barcaldine standing around, with others, the Tree of Knowledge. When the sun rises, Mornington Island songmen will sing the sun up and open the Biennial Festival of Music. It will not be a music festival just for the big end of town. It will be a music festival that reaches right around the state. It will include segments in Townsville. It will include a very powerful coming together in Mackay of the South Sea Islander community, the Aboriginal community and the Torres Strait Islander community in a street carnival. It will include, in the case of Rockhampton, the very first symphony ever written in dedication to an Australian city. It will include things in Brisbane, Cooroy and Esk. It will of course include a powerful set of performances of gospel music in Logan, which I had the honour of attending with the member for Woodridge recently. There will also be performances in St George, Roma, Toowoomba, Chinchilla, Cairns and so on.

The festival is also about jobs. It will feature over 80 artists from 11 countries. It will host 12 world premiers, but it is important to note that 62 per cent of the music featured in the program is Australian, because we need to respect our own Australian culture in order to engage in a robust and open dialogue with the cultures of the world. That is the highest level. Some 1,000 artists and art workers will be employed over the life of the festival and overall participation levels have increased by 600 people over the 1999 festival. So this is good for jobs. It is good for affirming that which is one of the great cultural strengths of Queensland, namely, its decentralised nature.

One of the cultural strengths that we have is cultural diversity. People understand that biodiversity is an important concept in the life sciences. Cultural diversity is equally important in the life and culture of a nation. This affirms that, but does so in a way which is open to the world and which celebrates the geographic diversity of Queensland culture.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: The government introduced the policy of Art Built In. Can you please advise on the number of jobs which have been created by this policy and some significant examples of Art Built In.

Mr FOLEY: Since the implementation of the Art Built In policy, the first whole-of-government cultural policy, a total of 275 jobs have been generated for artists, craft workers, designers, public art project managers, cultural consultants and curators. The jobs have been created via 15 completed Art Built In projects valued at \$2.3 million and 58 currently active projects valued at \$10.4 million, making a total commitment of \$12.7 million towards the integration of art and design under the Art Built In policy. A total of 54 per cent of all Art Built In projects and 34 per cent of all jobs have been created in regional Queensland. Some 26 per cent of jobs have gone to indigenous and culturally diverse artists and arts workers.

This is about art built in, not art tacked on. This is about infusing the process of building public buildings with the spirit of artistic and cultural life. It is about re-establishing a sense of ownership by the public of the public buildings, which at the end of the day they own. Things like the Roma Street Parkland and the South East Busways project are good examples of this working in practice. In the case of my former portfolio of Justice and Attorney-General, I was absolutely delighted with the response of the Kowanyama and Bamaga communities of the northern peninsula area when they were given a chance to participate in the public art processes leading to the establishment of courthouses in those areas, or what they asked to be called community justice centres.

Through that process of engagement, they got a chance to have a say about the design and about the functioning of the buildings. They made a number of very practical and very good improvements that we had not thought of, including having a flexible design so that the courthouses could actually be used as meeting places for the community justice centres and thereby help people be diverted from the system. It is important in practice in terms of job outcomes. It is important as a vehicle for artistic expression. But, most importantly, it is important as a means of reconnecting government and community and of ensuring that members of the Queensland public who own these facilities have some opportunity to have a sense of ownership in them. Some 100 years ago people had real civic pride in public buildings. I think we have lost a lot of that. This is all about trying to rediscover some of the things that our grandfathers and grandmothers understood only too well.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: Can you inform the committee of some of the activities of the Pacific Film and Television Commission in the last 12 months.

Mr FOLEY: Yes. The PFTC has been doing a very good job indeed. I commend its chair, Sir Llew Edwards, and its executive officer, Robin James. Over the last financial year, that is, 2000-01, some \$156 million has been expended by film and television production companies in Queensland, resulting in an economic impact of more than \$399 million and creating over 2,800 jobs for Queenslanders. This has come about as a result of the establishment of the film industry in Queensland through the vision of the greatest Arts Minister that this state has had the honour of having, and I refer to the Honourable Wayne Goss. That initiative over 10 years ago to nurture that industry has given diversity to our economic base and generated a lot of jobs and a lot of artistic and cultural opportunities.

In June this year the PFTC celebrated 10 years of operation. The total economic impact of film production in Queensland for the last decade reached over \$2.2 billion. A little earlier we were talking about issues of diversity in the economy. This is a very important area of diversification. However, we have to make sure that

we create an active screen culture with it, that is, nurture local film-makers. We need to attract the Hollywood blockbusters, and that is why we need to do what we can to keep productions like *The Thin Red Line* coming. I met with some film executives from the Disney Corporation last weekend to try to convince them to make *Inspector Gadget 2* here. Over and above all that, what we need to do is to ensure that we have an active screen culture. That means supporting things like QPICS for young film-makers who will be the Steven Spielbergs of tomorrow, ensuring that events like the International Film Festival are available and having screen culture activities around the state.

⁰¹¹ The jobs that come from having a critical mass of foreign production attracted by the PFTC provide the opportunity for us to build a robust film industry that will withstand the pressures when the Aussie dollar hopefully goes back up one day. At the moment, people from north America are attracted because it is cheaper, as well as for our great locations and the can-do attitude of the Australian work force. We have to make sure that we provide opportunities for our creative people and our technical people so that when the Aussie dollar goes back up and it is not so cheap to come here we will have a film industry of our own that we can be proud of.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for government members' questions has expired. I call the member for Beaudesert.

Mr LINGARD: Minister, I ask these questions on behalf of Mr Copeland, the shadow minister. On page 2-10 of the MPS, relating to Arts Queensland, it is detailed that employee expenses are to rise from an actual spending of \$3,172,000 in 2000-01 to an estimated \$10,367,000 in 2001-02, yet the estimated staff number for 2001-02 shows an increase of only eight people. How do you therefore account for an increase in staff expenditure of over \$7 million?

Mr FOLEY: The short answer is that it is a consequence of the restructure of Arts Queensland out of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and its establishment as a department in its own right. The effect of that is that one is comparing four months of the 2000-01 period with the full year of 2001-02. If one looks to the explanation of variances in the financial statement set out on page 2-21, one sees comments relating to the establishment of the department. The other thing to keep in mind is that after the election heritage trails came into this portfolio out of the Premier's portfolio. That also has to be taken into account in reading all of this material.

Mr LINGARD: On page 2-10 of the MPS, also relating to Arts Queensland, it is stated that supplies and services expenses are to rise from an actual spending amount of \$11,091,000 in 2000-01 to an estimated \$21,436,000 in 2001-02. Minister, what does this increase relate to?

Mr FOLEY: Again, we are talking about supplies and services for four months, with the department being in its own right for 2001-02 following its relocation out of JAG. Of course, we have heritage trails in there as well. Basically, that is the explanation for the difference.

Ms LEE LONG: On page 2-2 of the MPS you state that you are spending \$33 million on the Heritage Trails Network. How much of this funding has been allocated to the Tablelands electorate? What is the breakdown of the funding? Has it been paid out yet? What programs are to be funded?

Mr FOLEY: I will set out the list of the heritage trails, starting with Atherton. \$1.3 million has been allocated for the Atherton Chinatown. I think that is that fascinating Joss House in Atherton that I had the honour of visiting a year or so ago.

It is an absolutely wonderful place but in need of some attention. I see an allocation for Hallorans Hill. Under the general heading of 'Presenting the Wet Tropics', for Hasties Swamp there is a \$172,000 allocation; for Hallorans Hill \$643,000; for the Malanda Heritage Centre \$800,000; for walking tracks \$988,000; for the Ravenshoe Cultural Unity Centre \$280,000; and for the far-north Queensland historic mining precinct \$2 million. That is at Chillagoe. A lot of things will be happening in the Tablelands.

This brings me back to the earlier question about the museum. One of the real messages we have to get through—it is a bit hard to get through to people sometimes in Brisbane—is that there is a fascinating cultural heritage mosaic throughout this state that we need to invest in, preserve and make accessible to people. If we want people to come up from Sydney and Melbourne and bring dollars out of the drive market, we have to do things such as this.

The Heritage Trails Network is a \$110 million joint initiative of the Queensland and Commonwealth governments. It is designed to provide a lasting legacy of the Centenary of Federation. I know from my own visit to Atherton that I learned things about the Chinese experience from the last century and from the late 19th century that would chill your blood. There are amazing parts of our history that I think the ordinary person would find absolutely fascinating and be very interested to bring their family along to see.

Mr LESTER: Minister, last Sunday there was a very pleasant experience at the museum at Joskeleigh, depicting the past of the South Sea Islander people. This museum was opened by Dr Galloway. I was able to present to Doris Leo a medal in recognition of her work in this Year of the Volunteer. Yuri Thurnell was there, depicting the multicultural side of things. It was just a wonderful thing to have been at. Our government played a part, your government has played a part and we are depicting the history of these people. Also, the Sugar Museum made available a gallery of exhibition. In trying to promote this wonderful thing and the culture there, I wonder whether you would consider having Dr Galloway make a few comments as to his impressions of that wonderful day last Sunday.

Mr FOLEY: I think I am in the hands of the committee. I can certainly affirm, on its behalf, the museum's strong commitment to projects such as that. I accept what you have said. With the permission of the committee, I will invite Dr Galloway to say a few words about his impressions of that.

Dr GALLOWAY: It certainly was a memorable occasion. It was the opening of Australia's first Australian South Sea Islander museum. There is a very strong community in Joskeleigh, just outside of Rockhampton, reflecting the early history of the South Sea Islanders coming to Australia to work in the sugar industry. It certainly follows on from the relationship the Queensland Museum has had with this community since 1994. That has been represented in a number of major exhibitions that have both toured the state and have been at the Queensland Museum. The museum development officer in the area, who is funded through a grant from Arts Queensland, was also very instrumental in bringing that particular museum to fruition.

Mr FOLEY: I had the pleasure of launching a South Sea Islands exhibition in Townsville at the Museum of Tropical Queensland, which we developed on request from the people of New Caledonia. One hundred years ago Queensland companies brought Kanakas from the island of Lifou in the Loyalty Islands to work in the sugar industry. The people of that island, Lifou, asked through the consul-general in Noumea for some assistance in getting some historical records of that.

We were delighted to assist. We put together a photographic exhibition under the heading of *Terre d'exil*, a land of exile. It is to be installed initially in Noumea and then brought to Easo on the island of Lifou in order to, as it were, be a closing of the circle of those in some cases melancholy and tragic events of a century ago. We welcome the interest of the member for Keppel in the history and culture of the South Sea Island people and can assure him of the government and the museum's support for it.

Mr LESTER: What we need now is a programming in the various promotions you do throughout the country to include this, because it is particularly special. You can go to so many museums. I have been to the Museum of Tropical Queensland, too, and it is excellent. This is something very special.

We also need to deal with the issue of security. I bring that up here because this is in the former schoolteacher's house, and the historic Joskeleigh State School has a history in itself. I will not go into that here. I do worry greatly about the security there. This place is literally in the bush, on its own. I think we need to look at a live-in caretaker or somebody in a caravan nearby, because unfortunately things do happen these days. We need to bear that in mind or all of this wonderful work could be damaged or even lost.

Mr FOLEY: I would be very happy to include reference to that museum in material that our department puts out, and I will take the matter up with the Minister for Tourism, my colleague the Honourable Merri Rose, to make sure that that is included in references that her department is involved with. We are trying hard to build partnerships with a whole lot of these museums, whether it is woodworks at Gympie or the display centre at the Glen Lyon Dam. These are campuses which the Queensland Museum either operates directly or in partnership. The Cobb & Co. Museum in Toowoomba I have referred to. The museum of north-west Queensland is a major \$10 million project that Tony McGrady and I launched up there just the other day. There are things such as the Sciencentre, of course, and the Lands, Mapping and Surveying Museum, which a lot of people do not know about.

As to the security and the management of these things, I think that illustrates the need for some support. We have tried to have museum development officers stationed around the state. This goes back to the policy of hidden heritage, to which I referred earlier—the realisation that the world does not simply revolve around the capital city. For a capital city to serve its function properly, it needs to have a strong relationship with the regions, and for us to celebrate the geographic diversity of this state we need to celebrate its regional diversity.

⁰¹² So that is why we have museum development officers. In fact, in this budget we have transferred management of those from Arts Queensland generally across to the Queensland Museum. Things like security, presentation, climate control of artefacts—all that sort of thing—are matters on which the museum development officers can provide advice and support, so that some of these communities which have interest and enthusiasm but not necessarily expertise or curatorial skills can get access to the highly skilled and trained officers of the Queensland Museum to make sure that, when they put these facilities together, they at least get the benefit of advice. Places like Mount Morgan, quite close to your own electorate, have absolutely fascinating museums that have been held together by volunteers over many, many years. We are now giving them some assistance. But when the community at large start to realise the extent of these networks through the heritage trails money and so on, I think it provides an opportunity to give a real jobs boost in the bush through cultural tourism.

Mr LESTER: That is good, Minister. We do need to really look at that security one there at Mount Morgan amidst a town. It is rather different, and I do worry about it being out in the middle of the bush. I just want to pay tribute to the many officers who were involved in giving assistance to make sure that this was presented correctly. Minister, with regard to the State Library expansion, MPS page 3-1, could you please specify how much is being spent on the expansion program? Could you also please detail how much money will be spent to increase and update the content of the State Library, that is, books and digital content?

Mr FOLEY: In terms of the extension of the State Library at South Bank, that is part of a \$229 million capital investment that includes the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art. In fact, in a very short while I shall be launching with the Premier an architectural competition for the extensions to the library and for the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art.

The library, of course, is decentralised throughout Queensland par excellence. It provides support to regional libraries right around the state through, in some cases, funding and in other cases through the delivery of books through what is called the Country Lending Service. In addition to that, the state government provides a 20 per cent subsidy on new library buildings, and this amounted to some \$2.6 million last year. Just over \$22 million of funding for public libraries in Queensland represents 60 per cent of the Library Board's totally budget of \$37 million. The \$37 million budget includes \$3.2 million provided to the Brisbane City Council through the Public Library Grants Scheme, \$19 million to regional libraries throughout the state and \$14.8 million to the State Library at South Bank.

The State Library is actually a very key part of us becoming a Smart State. Libraries are not just places where people go to read or borrow books; they are centres of information. The library is now, in addition to its traditional services, actually offering research services; and a number of small businesses who cannot afford the cost of engaging in research facilities that the big end of town have access to are actually using the library on a commercial basis because of their expertise in marshalling services.

The other good thing about the extensions to the library here is that they will actually enable the library to increase its regional services to regional Queensland. While it is not always easy to explain to people how, if you spend more money on what they are doing here, it will assist people throughout the rest of the state, all they need to do is go down to Montague Road at West End to see the huge facility that they have for sending out books to the rest of the state. It is a massive undertaking.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, in the remaining time we will have one question each from government and non-government members. The member for Keppel has a further question.

Mr LESTER: Minister, within the MPS there is no detailed funding allocation for the South Bank museum or for regional museums. Could we just have a look at this issue and see what we have got here and what guarantees we have got for the future? I know you have been commenting about it. I recently went into a museum in Charters Towers, and I was amazed; I did not even know it was there. Extraordinary! But in all fairness, I could probably say that a little bit of attention would be very good. And that is not meant to be critical in any shape or form. There is just a limit to what some of these people can do and a limit to the expertise they have available locally.

Mr FOLEY: The funding for the Queensland Museum in the budget is \$13.2 million. That represents a significant increase of 23 per cent since 1996-97. Over the last five years the museum has been involved in a major expansion relating to its ability to deliver services to regional Queensland. Of necessity, the application of museum resources, both financial and human, needs to be allocated to various areas of focus, such as the Museum of Tropical Queensland. In addition to that, the museum also receives \$400,000 per annum from Arts Queensland to support and manage the regional museums development officer program, to which I just referred, and raises over \$5 million through its own programs.

Capital expenditure through the Queensland Museum since 1998-99 amounts to over \$73 million, comprising allocations for the Museum of Tropical Queensland in Townsville, the railway workshops in Ipswich and the Cobb & Co. Museum in Toowoomba. In addition to that, the museum does a whole lot of work for people. For example, when I was with Senator Ron Boswell opening the marine dinosaur museum, I wondered whether they invited Ron and me because we resembled marine dinosaurs more than anybody else.

Mr LESTER: You said that.

Mr FOLEY: The thought crossed my mind. What was interesting there was the assistance that experts from the Queensland Museum had offered to the people of Richmond in establishing Kronosaurus Corner. And anyone driving through Richmond with their family would find it absolutely fascinating, because those officers—although it is not technically part of the Queensland Museum—have been quite helpful in arranging the fossils and in helping set up a kids space. Indeed, officers of the museum have been trying to give a great deal more attention to facilities for children and making museums accessible for children. I know that is a particularly keen interest on the part of Dr Galloway, and I support him in that regard.

So the funding has increased, but also the focus has gone statewide in a very strong way. The Queensland Museum has always been a statewide institution, but what we are now seeing is that reflected in bricks and mortar. The other day at Ipswich, I went back to launch the workers forum at the Queensland railway workshops. That is something which has struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the people of Ipswich, and I commend the museum for their work on it.

Mr RODGERS: Minister, \$15 million has been allocated for regional capital infrastructure projects. Can you give me some examples of projects where this money has been spent?

Mr FOLEY: Yes. The \$15 million in regional arts infrastructure includes a number of major projects, such as the Mount Isa mining heritage museum, which Tony McGrady and I had the pleasure of launching the other day—or launching the commencement of the project; in Cairns, \$2.7 million for development of arts accommodation for contemporary arts; in Bundaberg, just under half a million dollars to establish the Bert Hinkler museum to house the original and replica aircraft associated with Bert Hinkler; and I am sure the member for Woodridge will not let me forget the \$2 million which has been allocated to the Logan City Council, along with other money, for the establishment of a cultural and entertainment centre; the \$500,000 for the Mount Morgan Shire Council, which backs up on some other money through the heritage trails funds for the cultural interpretation of Mount Morgan; \$1 million towards the customs house redevelopment in Rockhampton, which again backs up with some other money through the heritage trails to make that facility particularly good; things like the \$423,000 for the Australian Sugar

Industry Museum for further development of the Sugarama Gallery; and over \$1 million for the Gladstone City Council for the development of a new wing and installation of storage facilities in the loading dock at the Gladstone museum and art gallery. I am happy to table the details for the assistance of the committee.

What this is about is this: when we embarked on the Millennium Arts Project when we came to government, we were determined that we needed to address the arts infrastructure needs of regional Queensland. It was important to proceed with the Gallery of Modern Art and the extensions to the State Library, but it is equally important to invest in museums throughout Queensland and to give access to the arts and proper arts and cultural infrastructure around the state. That is what we have sought to do. This includes some things which are very, very practical in their nature; for example, just over \$148,000 to build two shower and toilet amenity blocks on the festival grounds at the Laura Dance Festival. Having been there a couple of weeks ago, I think it is money well spent—a modest amount of funds in the scheme of a government's capital works project, but well targeted, supportive of a very important cultural activity on the part of indigenous Queensland and reflective of our commitment to the regions.

The CHAIRMAN: There being no further questions, that concludes the examination of the estimates of expenditure for the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and Minister for the Arts. I thank the minister and all the officers for their attendance and the work that has gone into the estimates process. Thank you very much.

Mr FOLEY: I repeat my earlier thanks to officers of Arts Queensland and to the cultural statutory authorities for their detailed assistance to me in the preparation of work for the assistance of the committee.

Sitting suspended from 11.28 a.m. to 11.48 a.m.

EDUCATION**IN ATTENDANCE**

Hon. A. M. Bligh, Minister for Education
Mr J. Varghese, Director-General
Ms B. Griffiths, Senior Policy Adviser
Mr G. McGowan, Manager, Executive Services
Ms J. Diessel, Director, Teaching and Learning Branch
Mr P. Leitch, Director, Human Resources Branch
Ms R. Logan, Director, Finance Support Unit
Mr T. Mould, Assistant Director-General (Schools—Metropolitan)
Mr N. Whittaker, Assistant Director-General (Resource Services)

The CHAIRMAN: The next item for consideration is the expenditure for the Department of Education and the time allotted is three hours. The committee has agreed that it will suspend the hearings for lunch from 12.45 to 1.45. I remind members of the committee and the minister that the time limit for questions is one minute and answers are to be no longer than three minutes. A single chime will give a 15-second warning and a double chime will sound at the expiration of these time limits. An extension of time for answers may be given with the consent of the questioner. A double chime will also sound two minutes after an extension of time has been given. The sessional orders require that at least half the time available for questions and answers in respect of each organisational unit is to be allotted to non-government members. Any time expended when the committee deliberates in private is to be equally apportioned between government and non-government members. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask departmental officers to identify themselves before they first answer a question.

These proceedings are similar to parliament to the extent that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. In that regard, I remind members of the public that in accordance with Standing Order 195 any person admitted to a public hearing may be excluded at the discretion of the Chair or by order of the committee. The sessional orders provide that a member who is not a committee member may, with the committee's leave, ask the minister questions. In relation to media coverage of the Estimates Committee F hearing, the committee has resolved that still photographs and silent television film coverage can be permitted for the first five minutes of each department. My final request is that if you have a mobile phone, check your handbags and pockets and please turn them off now and if you have calls to make, please do that outside the chamber. I now declare that the proposed expenditure for the Department of Education is open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Ms BLIGH: Thank you, I would like to make some opening comments. With a record \$4.3 billion expenditure in the state government funding this year, the Beattie government's 2001-02 state budget has highlighted our commitment to education in Queensland. This record allocation marks an 8.9 per cent increase in state government appropriation for the Education portfolio from \$3.924 billion to

\$4.272 billion and a \$2.69 million or 9.1 per cent increase in state funding to Queensland's public schools from \$2.97 billion to \$3.243 billion and an increase of \$23.2 million or 9.5 per cent increase to non-government schools from \$242.8 million to \$266 million.

Madam Chair, as you would be aware, education lies at the heart of the Beattie government's Smart State vision. This record budget is a sign of our commitment to achieving that vision. It delivers on our election commitments and builds on the Beattie government's 2010 strategy to strengthen state education across Queensland. Highlights of this year's appropriation and budget include an allocation of \$22.8 million for students with disabilities, \$18.2 million to boost information technology for students and teachers, at least 135 additional teachers as part of the Beattie government's commitment to employ an additional 800 teachers over four years, an extra \$1 million a year to expand the New Basics trial to a further 20 schools, \$50 million for the Triple R maintenance program over the next three years, \$11.9 million to assist more than 70 schools under the Cooler Schools Program, and \$10 million for eight new centres of excellence in maths, science and technology over three years. All of these initiatives will help drive the implementation of Queensland State Education 2010, build a stronger school system and support our teachers and help realise our vision to make Queensland the Smart State.

2010 has provided a renewed focus on learning, teaching, curriculum and assessment and preparing our young people for the future. As part of our focus on these areas the Beattie government has committed \$148 million in this financial year to ensure that Queensland students have solid literacy skills through the Reading Recovery Program, the development of a framework for whole-of-school literacy planning and a reading framework in partnership with 20 new school-based learning and development centres for literacy.

The past 12 months has seen huge strides forward in the implementation and success of the trial New Basics curriculum. Queensland is now leading the nation with its innovative future-oriented curriculum. Feedback from students, teachers and parents and high levels of international interest all indicate very positive signs that the New Basis trial is requiring students to apply a high level of rigour on relevant, engaging real-life tasks that are making learning exciting for both students and their teachers. I am delighted that we will be extending that trial to a further 20 schools this year.

We have also had success with our increased efforts to boost pathways for our students and our aim to increase retention rates by 20 per cent by the year 2010. All current data shows a strong increase in the numbers of students finishing year 12 or its equivalent. Student participation in school-based VET programs has increased to more than 60 per cent of students in years 11 and 12 with Queensland having more than half the national total of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. Early signs of success are also being shown in the alternative education trial where students are being reintegrated back into mainstream schools and boosting retention rates.

Our three new multipath colleges, established over the past 12 months, are also offering flexible learning environments for teenagers and young adults wanting to finish their senior certificate and other employment-related qualifications. To build on these improvements, Education Queensland has appointed Mr John Pitman to investigate ways to make the senior certificate process more flexible.

This genuine attempt by Education Queensland to improve its response to students at risk is further highlighted by our implementation of the Partners for Success Program. This program is already showing results. It is a long-term innovative approach to improving outcomes for indigenous students and has my full support.

Innovation is central to the philosophy behind Education Queensland's new schools, with its construction of new P-12 schools at Bentley Park, Woodcrest College, Varsity College and Calamvale Community College and the amalgamation of Kelvin Grove State High and primary. These new and enhanced schools have been designed in close cooperation with their school communities and have a strong community focus. The approach has also been embraced through our secondary school renewal program, which has seen school communities design their own facilities to meet their school community future needs.

As we all know, and recent studies have again highlighted, teachers are central to our children's education. Over the past 12 months we began to deliver on our commitment of 800 additional teachers and develop new teacher-specific strategies to support them in their important role of educating our children. This budget will continue to deliver on these key areas as we support our teachers to bring out the best in our children and prepare them for the future. I look forward to building on our successes in addressing the challenges of the future as we continue to implement that vision.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Minister. The first period of questions will commence with government members and I call the member for Woodridge.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: I recently visited one of the schools in my electorate, Woodridge State High School, which is one of the schools trialling alternative education for students at risk of not completing their education. Are you able to provide any early results of the alternative school trial referred to on page 1-12 of the MPS and its ability to improve retention rates and support schools with behaviour management issues?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for her question and I am pleased to hear that she has been out and visited the trial school in her electorate. These schools are a relatively new innovation and they need all the support from the people in the community that they can get and I encourage her ongoing interest.

The review of behaviour management that was undertaken by the department in 1999 recommended an action research trial take place to look at trialling alternative schooling provisions. This trial commenced in term two of the year 2000, so you will appreciate that it is still very early days but I am very pleased to inform the committee that early results are very encouraging. As I have stated in my introductory remarks, part of our 2010 strategy is a key goal to increase retention rates by 20 per cent by the year 2010. These five alternative trials are part of that effort.

There are four metropolitan sites where this is being trialled. They are Logan, Ipswich, Deception Bay and Alexandra Hills. Another school is being trialled in the Cairns district. The program is targeted at students aged 10 to 15 years who are at risk of not completing school. The program offers students different pathways in an effort to re-engage some of them who have disengaged from schooling in the process and to offer, where appropriate, alternative curricula. At the end of term four in 2000 an interim review was conducted and provided, as I have said, some very early positive results. The interim review indicated that both students and their

parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with what is happening in the early phases. At the time of the review, 67 students were enrolled in the program.

The review showed that 80 per cent of parents and students surveyed indicated that completion of school was now more likely as a result of attending one of these trial programs. Twenty-five per cent of students enrolled during semester two 2000 have been successfully integrated back into mainstream schools, and I think that is something that is really is one of the most central aims of these programs—to reintegrate, wherever possible, students back into the mainstream environment, and I am pleased to note some success. Anecdotal evidence has been provided to indicate that there has been an improvement in student attitude, self-esteem and successful participation in both individual and group programs. Importantly, I think, many students who prior to coming into the program had a record or a history of poor attendance and high truancy rates are now much more regular attendees at their program, and that has translated back to regular attendance when they have gone back into the mainstream environments.

A formal review is due to take place at the conclusion of the current school term. That review will not only look at an evaluation of these five programs but also it will look at other models of alternative schooling that is occurring in community-based facilities that are not necessarily funded by Education Queensland so that we get a comprehensive picture of outcomes across a group of different models. I look forward to the results and to seeing what is happening in your schools.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: Given the amount of resources expended by the government on behaviour management strategies in Queensland schools, what has been the community reaction to this program?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member, again, for her question and I am happy to respond. It is clear that the management of difficult behaviours in schools, particularly as children make that transition from childhood into adolescence, is a very complex issue. Queensland is not the only state that is grappling with that issue; it is an issue that exercises the minds of educators in jurisdictions across the country and, indeed, in most nations of the world. An article this week in the *Australian* newspaper about the efforts being made in Queensland around alternative schooling has drawn a lot of interest from other states. It indicates that this is something that is exercising other educators and other jurisdictions.

Education Queensland is trying to deal with this matter on a range of fronts, as I have said, through the trial schools, but through Queensland State Education 2010, the department and the government recognises that state schools should provide safe, tolerant and disciplined learning environments that allow all students the opportunity to learn. Through its districts, Education Queensland provides funding and support for a range of measures, including support staff and operational funding for the alternative schools trial; early intervention, support and classroom support with around 300 behaviour management support staff in districts; support to develop and implement school behaviour management plans in every school; and every district has a behaviour management committee, which determines local response through a mix of teachers, teacher aides, guidance officers, social workers and psychologists. The interest in those committees, I think, is an indication of community involvement.

⁰¹⁴ I have to say that I am very disappointed to note that some members of the parliament, and two of them are here today, have expressed a view that I think is better located in the 1950s. Recent comments by the member for Beaudesert reflect a lack of understanding of the complexity of the issues. I noted, member for

Beaudesert, that you indicated in your budget reply speech that you are a great advocate of corporal punishment and that you loved it when you were a principal. I am very pleased to say to this committee that the return to corporal punishment is not on the agenda of this government or of Education Queensland.

I was also concerned to note the member for Tablelands saying that, while she thought teachers did a fine job, she was concerned that their hands are tied as far as discipline is concerned. I am not sure in what way the member for Tablelands thinks that teachers' hands are tied and whether it is another comment in relation to corporal punishment. Today I am pleased to have the opportunity to say that teachers have a range of options. Every day in our classrooms they deal very effectively, in my view, with some very complex and difficult issues. Those options range from counselling and time-out through to suspension and exclusion. Those matters are taken very seriously in Education Queensland schools. I believe teachers have a great deal of support in dealing with some very, very difficult issues. Education Queensland's view and our government's view is shared by most other civilised countries and every other state in Australia.

Mr FENLON: Obviously behaviour management strategies are trying to deal with a wide range of complex and interconnected issues. As an example, could you inform the committee as to how drug education is incorporated into the curriculum?

Ms BLIGH: Drug education is a significant priority for Queensland state schools. I am happy to inform the committee of some of the initiatives that are happening in that regard. Education Queensland, in its new policy on drug education and intervention in schools, has moved much further towards building drug education and intervention, and integrating and embedding it in the curriculum across year levels. The aim is to ensure that all students have access to both drug education programs and provisions for intervention on an ongoing basis, rather than a one-off basis. Schools are required to implement drug education programs that include referral, counselling, and procedures for managing drug-related incidents at schools.

At a school level, the years 1 to 10 health and physical education syllabus is used to introduce those topics. I would like to table the material prepared by the Queensland School Curriculum Council in this regard, because it is an excellent document for people who are concerned about drug education in schools. It is one that I would encourage members of the committee to look at. It not only deals specifically with drugs, but also some of the issues around a child's capacity to resist and to recognise the pressures that might be brought to bear with them. It deals with issues in an embedded way in the curriculum such as self-esteem, confidence, resisting peer pressure, et cetera. Where schools develop programs that work well, the government is committed to providing funding to support and develop those models so that they can be spread throughout other schools.

The new policy places an emphasis on working with local communities to address these issues. The activities that are being done are undertaken in conjunction the national school drug education strategy which has been endorsed by both Commonwealth and state ministers. The strategy includes professional development for teachers, parents and administrators, and delivering drug education resources to schools, including through the Education Queensland website.

Drug summits have been held in some schools to involve the local community in dealing with drug education and intervention. It is important to recognise that teachers are not responsible for this alone and nor are schools. School-based

nurses, police and chaplains work with teachers in our schools, but Queensland Health and other organisations outside of our schools provide resources that are used by many of our teachers. It is a complex issue, but Education Queensland is committed to continuing to try whatever works with our young people on this issue.

Mr FENLON: Minister, I refer to your answer to the non-government question on notice relating to consultancies. Can you provide the committee with the background and findings of the longitudinal study?

Ms BLIGH: Yes, I am delighted to have a question on this. The Queensland school reform longitudinal study was commissioned in 1997 by the former coalition government when the member for Robina, as he now is, was the minister. It was commissioned to investigate the relationship between school-based management, particularly some of the initiatives of the previous coalition government in relation to the Leading Schools program, and enhanced student learning outcomes.

The research involved the observation of 975 lessons across years 6, 8 and 11 in 24 Queensland state schools, including both primary and secondary schools in a diverse group of schools from 1998 to the year 2000. One thousand interviews were conducted with 250 teachers and 600 questionnaires were filled out.

This study is the single largest longitudinal study ever done on the Queensland state education system. As I said, the study was commissioned by the former government to, in many ways, justify its approach to education reform. I have to inform the committee that the study could find no direct causal link between school-based management and better educational outcomes for students. Indeed, the report points to the dangers of a system that values leadership being confused with management and managerialism.

What it did find is that the leadership capacity of individual principals and the teaching and learning capacities of teachers are the driving force behind better outcomes for children in classrooms. Those principals and teachers who had the capacity to support students were able to provide better outcomes where they had the support to focus on educational outcomes.

The longitudinal study shows the errors of some of the thinking in the past, not only in Queensland but in other western jurisdictions, and gives us some pointers of where we can focus our attention in the future for improvement. In my view it also confirms that Education Queensland and the Queensland Government's direction as set by our 2010 vision statement is heading in the right direction. I am delighted to see that external confirmation of the direction that we are heading in.

Mr FENLON: As a follow up to that, what initiatives are now in place to address the findings of that study?

Ms BLIGH: Considering that the former coalition government regarded it as important to allocate \$1.3 million on this study, it seems on the face of it extraordinary that after \$1.3 million and three years of investigations we have determined that it is the quality of teaching that makes the difference to students. It might have seemed self-evident without that investment. Nevertheless, I think it is important to have that confirmed by a very reputable external source and so comprehensively confirmed. Our government, and I think you will see this in our initiatives over the past three years and into the next term, has always understood that feature of the education system.

The preliminary results of the study have been available on an interim basis to Education Queensland for about 18 months to two years. You can see those results

influencing the thinking around the implementation of 2010, Partners for Success and other strategies.

One of the significant reforms that I announced in conjunction with the release of the report was the introduction of a new curriculum framework for years 1 to 10 in Queensland state schools. The curriculum framework is a Queensland first. It is about guaranteeing standards, quality and approach to teaching and learning in Queensland state schools. The curriculum framework is designed to assist schools to develop quality curriculum plans and, indeed, requires schools to have in place a curriculum plan that focuses on the core learning areas for students, teaching strategies, assessment and reporting guidelines. The curriculum framework is just one of the reforms that is in line with Queensland State Education 2010, but I believe it takes us just that bit closer to the greater focus on education rather than managerialism at a school level that the study identifies as necessary.

Some of the other reforms include the development and implementation of the 2010 agenda, which is really in line with many of the results of the study with its focus on quality curriculum for the future, supporting schools and unlocking the skills of our work force. The commitment by the government to 800 extra teachers again will attempt to address teaching and learning outcomes by providing for smaller class sizes in some areas.

I note the comments in the public arena by the member for Beaudesert in relation to this study and his view that it leads to a conclusion that we need smaller class sizes. I have to say that in two volumes of more than 1,000 pages, the question of class sizes is not considered by the study, so I am interested in his conclusions in that regard.

The establishment of the Council for Education Renewal, which focuses its work on providing advice on strategic issues facing Education Queensland, is another reform that we believe will take us down the right path, as is the establishment of the Learning and Development Foundation for the professional development and support of our teachers. That really focuses on the importance of providing investment in the professional development of teachers. The establishment of minimum standards for teachers in learning technology, the development of a curriculum framework in years 1 to 10, and the establishment of the assessment and reporting task force are very significantly moves in the right direction.

The CHAIRMAN: I refer to your answer to the government question on notice that refers to the maths, science and technology centres that the Beattie government is establishing. What are the benefits that these centres are expected to bring?

Ms BLIGH: As you would know, during the election campaign in the lead-up to this year's state election the government promised the establishment of six centres of excellence in maths, science and technology. I am delighted to advise the committee that we have been able to go further than our election commitment and we will be delivering eight of those centres into schools across Queensland.

The centres of excellence are part of our government's vision to make Queensland the Smart State. It is about renewing our focus on boosting our capacity in maths, science and technology. The centres will operate in partnership with industry, the community and local schools to enhance student achievement in the key areas and prepare young Queenslanders for a very rapidly changing world.

I have already announced a number of these centres. The ones I have announced are located at Ironside State School in Brisbane, Helensvale State High School on the Gold Coast, Redcliffe State High School, Toowoomba State High

School in partnership with Highfields State School, Townsville State High School, Pioneer State High School in Mackay and Sunset State School in Mount Isa. The eighth centre of excellence will be announced in the near future. The Beattie government is committed to providing high-quality state education and these centres are part of our plan to continue to strengthen and revitalise state education across the state. It delivers on our commitment, as I have said, to spend \$10 million over the next three years on these centres.

The centres will be working in partnership with industry. Each centre will be required to have a reference group attached to it. The reference group will involve members of local industry relevant in the areas of science, maths and technology as well as, where appropriate, members of communities such as universities where there is that link in the regions that they have been put in place.

The centres will provide intensive remedial intervention and assistance to students who are struggling in these areas. They will also provide residential workshops and other opportunities for children who have particular talents in these areas. They will provide, importantly, professional development and training for teachers in maths, science and technology education. I think everybody here would recognise how rapidly those fields are changing and we need to provide professional development opportunities for many teachers in those areas to stay abreast of their fields.

The centres will have discretionary funds available to schools involved in the program to apply for teacher relief to allow teachers to take advantage of the programs that will be on offer. They will also be providing an extensive range of expanded learning material for students, including online material. The centres will embark on planning for their opening with a view to be operational in the beginning of term 4 in 2001.

⁰¹⁵ I think we are all aware that young people these days are facing a working world very different from the one that their parents and people in our age group entered. This pace of change shows no sign of slowing down and we are determined to keep up with that change. That is what these centres are about.

The CHAIRMAN: The time allocated for questions from government members has expired.

Mr LINGARD: I heard your comments and I now know why the government members demanded that they go first—to give you that couple of little shots. I refer to the recent school reform longitudinal study, which has been referred to already. It places particular emphasis on the need for professional development of Queensland teachers, more so on quality teaching. What funds is the state government providing for professional development of teachers in this state budget?

Ms BLIGH: I am very happy to answer the question. As I have outlined, one of the most significant messages I take out of the longitudinal study is the need for us to be providing more resources and investment into the professional development of our teachers. There are a number of areas where funds have been made available this year through the Learning and Development Foundation, which is a recent innovation in Education Queensland to provide opportunities for teachers.

I might have to take on notice the amounts for every single program. But I am also happy to put on record here that what I as minister will be looking at over the next 12 months in terms of the outcomes of the longitudinal study is how that will influence our thinking in the lead-up to the next budget. What I can provide for you

is the budget for the Learning and Development Foundation, which is around \$6.6 million from state funds and about \$3.8 million from Commonwealth funds. That provides for services and programs across a range of areas, such as the Quality Teaching Program, the leadership and culture strategy for senior staff, including principals, across a number of regions, and workshops around innovative designs for enhancing achievement in schools, which is the IDEAS program. I am not sure if it has happened in any of your schools yet, but it may have. A number of initiatives are happening. It is about a \$9.9 million budget this year across each of those. If you want it broken down, I can get that for you.

Mr LINGARD: I just noticed that there is no reference in the budget papers to that \$3.7 million or \$3.8 million which has come through from the federal government.

Ms BLIGH: The Quality Teaching Program is a Commonwealth initiative across Australia. But those moneys are not counted as state funds, either. They are included in the financial statement.

Mr LINGARD: It just appears that the state government is not putting any funds at all into the Quality Teaching Program.

Ms BLIGH: No, but that does not mean that we are not funding other professional development. The Quality Teacher Program is just one part of a multipronged strategy to improve the professional development opportunities for our staff across a range of areas. For example, we are putting resources into providing opportunities for every teaching staff member in Queensland employed in our Queensland schools to complete the minimum standards for information technology. We anticipate that everyone will have had an opportunity to participate in that program by the end of this financial year.

The professional development of staff is, as I have said, a multipronged approach. The Quality Teacher Program is only one part of it. That is a Commonwealth program across all states of Australia. But the investment from Queensland is double what the Commonwealth is putting into that one part.

Mr LINGARD: Can you explain what has happened with the enrolment benchmark adjustment, that is, the money from the federal government? How much did Queensland receive this year?

Ms BLIGH: Queensland will be funding our learning centres in science, maths and technology. Our intention is to fund that out of the enrolment benchmark adjustment. But the Commonwealth is in discussions and negotiations with state ministers across Australia about their requirements around that program. I have had at least one or perhaps two pieces of correspondence from Dr Kemp. Obviously, the Commonwealth will have some requirements. They have asked that the states put in place programs around those funds that focus on science, maths and technology. It is Queensland's intention that the funds from the enrolment benchmark adjustment will go to funding the maths, science and technology centres that I have outlined already.

Mr LINGARD: So are all centres being funded from that particular program? How much did Queensland receive from that fund?

Ms BLIGH: We are anticipating this year that the enrolment benchmark adjustment from the Commonwealth will be \$4.6 million. We made a commitment to the eight centres for excellence for maths, science and technology that we would allocate \$10 million over three years. You can see that is an average of about \$3.3 million a year. So there will be additional funds potentially from the enrolment

benchmark adjustment. As I said, we are still in discussions with the Commonwealth about satisfying its requirements around those funds. It may be that there will be some extra funds available, but that is a matter that has yet to be finalised with the Commonwealth.

Mr LINGARD: Obviously, my criticism is that nowhere in your budget papers have you made reference to any federal money. Obviously, the \$3.7 million for quality teaching is federal money. Obviously, the centres of excellence are all funded with federal money.

Ms BLIGH: I refer you to just about every financial statement in the MPS, where Commonwealth grants are specifically referenced. Wherever Commonwealth grants are received it will tell you that in the financial statements. Frankly, I do not regard the enrolment benchmark adjustment as federal money. The enrolment benchmark adjustment is money that rightly, in my view, belonged to the states in the first place. I would caution you against defending the enrolment benchmark process, because in my view it takes money from the states and particularly from public education, where it rightfully belonged in the first place. The federal government is obviously feeling the pressure about this and that is why it decided this close to the election to return it this year.

We know that we are in a position such that should Dr Kemp's agenda be pursued as vigorously as he would like it to be over the next three to four years there is no guarantee that we will get the enrolment benchmark adjustment returned next year. We have made a commitment to this. It will be funded that way this year. Who knows what he has in store for our system next.

Mr LINGARD: I note that the funding that other state governments give to their non-government schools is always referred to in their budget papers. I cannot find any reference in your budget papers to exactly how much is given to non-government schools.

Ms BLIGH: If you go to the MPS, it is in one of the administered items. I am just trying to find it. There is a table in the MPS, which we will provide for you in a moment, that represents what funds are going into non-government schools. But if you look at the top of page 1-5 of the MPS, you will see a statement there about Commonwealth grants and how much of that is a payment to non-state schools and organisations in percentage terms. I have already referred in my opening statement to the state funds made available through this budget into the non-government schools. It represents an increase of 9.5 per cent. I have given it to you in the opening statement in both quantum and percentage terms. Did you have another question in relation to that?

Mr LINGARD: No, as long as that is the figure that is going to non-government schools.

Ms BLIGH: In my introductory statement—and I am happy to repeat it; you might not have caught it—I said that the state funding to Queensland's non-government schools increased by \$23.2 million, or 9.5 per cent. It went from \$242.8 million to \$266 million.

Mr LINGARD: I note your statements about corporal punishment. In relation to your outputs, I am concerned about the lack of records that the central office seems to have about truancy and suspensions. Does the central office keep records of the suspensions that occur in Queensland schools?

Ms BLIGH: Central office has access to records about what occurs in relation to disciplinary absences across any school and by region. It has not been the practice

in recent times, as I understand it, to collect that data on a regular basis, but that is being looked at at the moment. Schools actually publish that data in their annual reports. There is no secrecy about this. If you had concerns about any school or region, that data is publicly available. As you know, there are different sorts of suspensions—from one to five days and suspensions for six to 20 days. It is not just a simple piece of data. But that material is available. Central office can get it from districts should they require it.

Data is collected and monitored on the use of these across schools. Our recent data does show that the majority of disciplinary absences are for short suspensions, as you would expect. The most common thing that happens is that they are suspended for one or two days. As they escalate in seriousness, they become less common across schools.

Mr LINGARD: There is no doubt that that is the common procedure. Initially when suspension programs were to be brought in students were to go on a program in the case of suspensions of six to 10 days. Obviously, those programs are not being provided. Therefore, the teachers are suspending students for one to five days—a very brief suspension. What I am asking is: what sorts of programs are in place for those students who are suspended for six to 10 days?

Ms BLIGH: Resources are provided at a district level and at school level for providing alternative education programs for students who are placed on longer term absences. These differ from school to school, district to district and region by region. I would disagree with your statement that funding is not available for those schools. Funding is available. Schools are provided with the resources. Schools use those resources in different ways. I frankly do not have a problem with that. I think it is important that schools work with their communities and they manage to provide different options appropriate to other resources that might be matched in the community.

The member for Keppel will be very familiar with the programs in his area around the full-service schools. Education Queensland has worked with some community organisations in his area and tried to salvage the best we could out of the Commonwealth's withdrawal from that program. The funds that are being used and the staffing resources that are being allocated for those programs in the Rockhampton and Yeppoon areas are from the moneys that are allocated to schools and to districts for that purpose. If you have evidence about a school or concerns about a particular school, I am happy to take a question on notice and to look at it. There are, as I have already said, 300 behaviour management staff allocated across the districts, and those behaviour management staff provide assistance to schools. But once a child has been suspended for more than six days there are resources available, as I understand it.

Mr LINGARD: I suggest that behaviour management is a much different thing to a student being suspended and then being able to go to a specific program away from that school. What I am asking is: what sort of funding is available to provide an avenue for principals to allow suspended students to go to another program outside the school?

Ms BLIGH: The problem with giving a specific answer on this—and I am happy to take it on notice—is that funds are allocated to schools, as you would know, for a range of purposes. Schools then make a decision about how they will use those funds in a flexible way. Some schools have relatively low incidences of disciplinary absences and would be making relatively low allocations in that regard. It might differ from year to year. You might have a particularly difficult year where you have

had, for a number of complex and difficult reasons—either a difficult family or a difficult couple of children—to fund out of your operational grant programs for those young people. If you like, I am happy to take it on notice and give you some examples from particular schools or regions. But these moneys are embedded in the operational grants of schools. On a year by year basis it would differ and on a school by school basis it would differ.

Mr LINGARD: I am sure you agree that we see in shopping centres and when driving around the streets kids who have obviously truanted from school and who are obviously joining in whatever promiscuity they can, for example, break-ins. We are now getting to a system where students are being suspended from one to five days very, very regularly. They have nowhere to go to and the system is just taking advantage of the fact that a kid can be tossed out of school from one to five days and not go to a program. When I look at your outputs, I see plenty by way of curriculum but there is very little by way of the management of schools and assistance to schools in looking after students who are either truanting or on suspension.

Ms BLIGH: I accept what you are saying; that is your belief about what is happening. What I am trying to say to you is that funds are made available to schools and schools use them in different ways. Yes, schools are required once students are suspended for six to 10 days to provide an alternative program. But that does not mean that schools are not looking at a very broad range of options for the young people that they have on their enrolment. I would like to recognise the work that schools are doing. It is a very complex area and there are some very difficult children and families that those schools have to manage. I am far from saying that we have got it absolutely perfectly right, but it is patently untrue to say that resources are not made available.

⁰¹⁶ I have some more information that I am happy to provide you with. At district office level these are the funds that have been made available specifically to districts to support students who were on six to 20-day absences. In the Logan-Beaudesert district, for example, the allocation in semester 2 in 2000 was \$59,900. In semester 1 this year the allocation was \$60,300. There is a total of \$120,000 in that district to specifically provide for paying for alternative programs.

The question of truancy and the question of young people disengaging from school is one that we take very, very seriously. In some of the answers to earlier questions from government members I have referred to the determination this government has to increase retention rates from 68 per cent to 88 per cent and beyond if possible. It is not always easy to judge the age of many of the young people whom you might see on the streets. Some of them may, in fact, be post the compulsory years of schooling; they are 15 or over and they have, in fact, left school. We do not think that that is good enough. It is not a truancy issue, it is a retention issue for those students. We want to make sure that we are doing what we can to get those children back into schools, to keep them in schools, and to give them meaningful educational experiences.

Mr LINGARD: I hear your comment that retention is a completely different thing to truancy. That is why I disagree with some of your statements. Quite honestly, I believe that the truancy and the suspension within schools has become an issue about which we, as a central group and as politicians, have to do something—and certainly the department. That is why I criticise.

Ms BLIGH: Can I say that the provisions that are operating were the ones put in place by your government. So we are very happy to take on board your criticisms.

Mr LINGARD: We also changed corporal punishment because we believed that those children would go to alternative programs. I do not believe those programs are being provided by your department. Page 1-11 refers to strategies to ensure improvement in access provision and learning outcomes for students in rural and remote locations. I refer to the fact that many students living in rural and remote areas of Queensland are successful in winning scholarships to private schools in Queensland. These students receive a living-away-from-home allowance from Education Queensland. Why is your department reviewing payments of the living-away-from-home allowance for those students so that they can be calculated on the balance of the tertiary fees rather than the accepted total fee as paid by all students? In other words, the cost of their scholarship is being subtracted from the total and then the living-away-from-home allowance is based on that.

Ms BLIGH: You are not talking about students who are entitled to assistance to bypass other schools?

Mr LINGARD: Students from the country who win private scholarships who get the living-away-from-home allowance.

Ms BLIGH: I understand that anecdotal evidence in 2000—that is last year—suggested to the department that tuition fee scholarships that were being offered by boarding schools had changed in type and number in recent years. It was decided to collect some data in 2001 on the scholarships being offered by schools to remote-area tuition allowance recipients. The information had not been collected in previous years, but entitlements were adjusted if parents provided relevant information.

It was also decided that all scholarship holders would receive full benefits in 2001 pending an evaluation of the data and a decision on policy for the future. Consultations about this are under way with the Isolated Children's Parents Association and non-state school bodies. This is one of those reviews that happens from time to time on the basis of changed circumstances. There is no effect on families and parents this year, but there may well be next year. If that is going to happen, it will be done in conjunction with the major stakeholders; that is, the non-government schools that provide boarding facilities and the parents and families who would be affected by any such decision.

Mr LINGARD: I suggest that if a student wins a scholarship and, therefore, receives a decreased living-away-from-home allowance, it is a benefit to Education Queensland and a detriment to both the student and the parents. I am asking: why would you do something like that to limit the opportunities for rural country kids?

Ms BLIGH: As I understand it, the concerns are being looked at to ensure that there is some equity in the system, and that regardless of which particular school you have won a scholarship to or where you come from in remote Queensland there is some equity across that program. It may be that it does not require changes, but I do not have any problem with it being looked at—and no decisions have been made. They will come across my desk before they are made. The status quo has been preserved for this year. As I have said, I am very certain of the capacity of the ICPA and the boarding school fraternity to put their case very strongly. As I understand it, some of those stakeholders are also concerned to ensure some equity across the program.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for non-government questions has expired. I refer to the Budget Highlights document and the expansion of the New Basics trial to more

schools. Can you please tell the committee which schools will be involved in phase 2 of the trial?

Ms BLIGH: I am delighted today to be in a position to announce that the next round of New Basics trial schools has now been finalised. Again we have gone beyond the election promise of 20 schools to 21 schools. Queensland is now leading the nation with this innovative futures-oriented curriculum. I am very pleased to say that there will now be more schools getting an opportunity to participate.

The phase 2 trial schools as part of our election commitment are as follows: Belmont State School, Boonah State High School, Dalby State School, Eatons Hill State School, Gladstone State High School, Healy State School in the Mount Isa district, the Taabinga State School in South Burnett, Varsity College at the Gold Coast and Woree State High School in Cairns. Also in the Biloela cluster there are six schools that will be participating. They include: Biloela State School, Goovigen State School, Jambin State School, Thangool State School, Mount Murchison State School and Prospect Creek State School. In the Calamvale-Coopers Plains district Algester State School and Calamvale Community College will be part of phase 2. In the Western Downs Rural School Alliance in the Chinchilla district, the Brigalow State School, Condamine State School and Dulacca State School are involved.

I am also delighted to announce that I have recently endorsed in-principle approval for the formation of a western cape college on Cape York Peninsula. The college will consist of the Weipa North State School, which is a P-12 school, Jessica Pointe State School, Mapoon State School, and Aurukun State School and will become a single multicampus school on the western cape. The four schools in this college will also be part of the phase 2 New Basics trial school. One of them—Aurukun—is already part of phase 1 and it will be extended into the other three campuses of this new college. It will also become part of a New Basics network on the cape linking with Hope Vale State School, which is already a phase 1 school. These 21 schools build on the 38 schools which are already part of the trial, which will be evaluated by the end of the year 2003. I look forward to hearing some of those results.

Mr RODGERS: What has been the community's response to the New Basics trial?

Ms BLIGH: I have to say that not only local communities but the international community has indicated very high levels of interest both from around Queensland, interstate and, indeed, around the world. Every week Education Queensland responds to requests to visit the trial schools and to present at state, national and international forums about New Basics.

Education Queensland has hosted international delegations from jurisdictions including Indonesia, the United States, Canada, Japan, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Tasmania, the ACT, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and South Australia—all wanting to know more about this innovative program. At the school level the feedback from students, teachers and parents is very positive. It is so good, in fact, that more than 120 schools applied to be part of the phase 2 round that I have just announced.

Early results show that the New Basics trial is requiring students to apply a high level of rigour on relevant engaging life tasks that are making learning exciting for both students and teachers. It is helping to connect our classrooms to the outside world and prepare young people for the workplaces of the future. As you would be

aware, the New Basics is an integrated framework for curriculum teaching and assessment involving 20 rich tasks that span years 1 to 9. These require students to go into greater depth with a focus on information technology.

I have to say that I am very pleased to note that the member for Beaudesert is a keen supporter, albeit it seems a recent convert. I noted, Kevin, that in your speech in the budget debate you said you were quite impressed with what is happening in both the key learning areas and the New Basics. I am pleased to have you on board for what I think is a very important trial.

It would seem—and I see he is not here—that the only person of whom I am aware is left opposing New Basics is the member for Robina, Mr Bob Quinn. The coalition, unfortunately, went to the recent state election with a commitment in its policy to abolish the New Basics trial if it won government. It stated that the coalition, if it came to government, would scrap the New Basics program. Frankly, having talked to a number of teachers, school principals and parents involved in these trials, I cannot imagine where Bob Quinn is getting his advice on this. It seems that only Bob Quinn and a handful of people from whom he takes his views have a problem with this trial. It is a program receiving international attention and great results in our classrooms.

I am pleased to note that both Mr Lingard and Mr Quinn will now have schools in their electorates that will be trialling phase 2. I am sure, Kevin, that you will go out because you are interested in it, but I encourage you to encourage Bob Quinn to go and have a look at it. Perhaps we can hope for some bipartisan support for the good results that are happening in our classrooms as a result. I know that there is some interest within the National Party in reviving the coalition. Maybe the New Basics is a good place to start to find something to agree on.

Mr RODGERS: This is just a follow-on to that. Could you please provide me with some more detailed examples of the New Basics curriculum in process?

Ms BLIGH: It is a integrated framework for curriculum teaching and assessment. As I said, it involves 20 rich tasks that span years 1 to 9. The rich tasks require students to go into greater death with a focus on information technology. As we continue to focus on essential skills of literacy and numeracy, the New Basics framework give us four new areas of cross-disciplinary learning. These four areas are life pathways, multiliteracies and communications media, active citizenship, and environments and technologies.

Just to give you some examples of the work being done, it includes the design by students as young as year 4 of an experiment using mathematical and physical sciences to be used by NASA in space shuttle flights, examining the science and ethics of issues in biotechnology, and students looking at international trade issues and identifying export opportunities. It involves students in year 3 designing web pages, for example, and requiring students to look at environmental issues and endangered species. On a recent visit to Kelvin Grove students were observed working on greenhouse gas issues in the Kyoto agreement targets. Another young year 8 student whom I observed working in the Kelvin Grove environment was developing dingo management plans for Fraser Island. You cannot get much more real life and relevant than those issues for today and into the future.

As part of the oral histories that are available under the program, the Hope Vale State School has been undertaking a very high level of quality work around the history of their community and the removal of many members of that community to Woorabinda during World War II and their return. The program links elders and

children in the school environment and is leading to a revival of that relationship and maintenance of culture. It has also seen improved attendance figures at Hope Vale State School. I hope that through the new western cape college New Basics will play an important part in the preservation of culture through the use of information technology. It is all a very exciting part of the Partners for Success strategy and I would like to recognise the work of Hope Vale State School in a very difficult environment and the exceptionally high standard of work that I have seen at that school. I think it points to the real meaning of leadership when you look at the work that the principal, Maureen Liddy, and her staff are doing there. Importantly, teachers are reporting to me that they feel reinvigorated as professionals in teaching as a result of being part of this trial. I think that is part of the secret of its success.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: Page 1-4 of the MPS highlights the money that will be allocated to teacher salaries as a part of the overall increase in the education budget and rightly makes the point that this should help attract and retain the best teachers for Queensland schools. What other strategies are being pursued for this important goal?

Ms BLIGH: As you rightly identified, there will be significant increases in teacher salaries during this year. In this financial year—in April 2002—there will be a 4.5 per cent increase. It is a high priority. It is one of the most significant allocations in increased spending not only into the education budget but in the state budget this year. It means that Queensland teachers are among the best paid in Australia. I for one think that that is a very good thing and I am very, very pleased that we are in a better position than some other states to actively recruit some of our talented and brightest graduates into a teaching career and to hopefully retain some of those teachers who have been some of our best and most experienced teachers in our classrooms.

The longitudinal study, which we have spoken about at some length this morning, highlighted the importance of teaching staff on the outcomes at a school level. The study highlighted that there is strong evidence that the investment in teachers, in their expertise, in their professional judgment and network, and in their intellectual development is necessary for productive pedagogics and productive outcomes.

I think that the funds available in this budget represent a major step in such an investment. The total salary rise for teachers will lead to an increase of 14.7 per cent over the life of the agreement. I think it is also important to note that the dramatic increase in salaries has occurred without trade-offs or cuts to teacher numbers. In fact, at the same time as making the salary increase available, the government has committed to increasing the number of teachers by 800 over four years in addition to the increases already expected for growth in enrolments.

⁰¹⁷ The substantial investment in teacher conditions and teacher numbers will decrease class sizes and allow us to support and retain our best teachers. Support comes at a time when, as a government, we are asking teachers to assist Queensland children to adapt and be ready for a very rapidly changing world. Teachers are playing their part in that process. As an example, by the end of this year—and I referred to this earlier—all of our teachers will have undergone training in the minimum standards for information technology training to assist them at a very basic level to maximise the use of information technology in teaching and learning in classrooms. That support is for nearly 34,000 teachers across the state. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them for their achievement in that regard

and for their commitment to continually upgrading their skills to make the most of the equipment that is being provided in classrooms.

The commitment extends beyond teacher salaries. This year teacher housing will see an allocation of \$7 million going into upgrading and improving teacher accommodation. Anyone who has travelled into some of the remote parts of Queensland will know how important appropriate accommodation is to recruitment and retention of teachers in some of those parts of Queensland. I look forward to the allocation of those funds. The Quality Teacher Program, which has already been mentioned, will continue to see an improvement in the professional development of teachers. The Learning and Development Foundation, which incorporates that program, will continue to work with teachers and schools this year to maximise those opportunities.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, on that positive note about the good work that teachers are doing in our schools, we will suspend the hearing for lunch. But do not go too far away, because we would like you to be back at 1.45 p.m.

Sitting suspended from 12.46 p.m. to 1.44 p.m.

The CHAIRMAN: We will resume the hearing for Estimates Committee F.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: Many of the staff who are referred to in the table on page 1-8 of the MPS are not directly engaged in teaching. What is EQ doing to ensure that their work is recognised?

Ms BLIGH: It is important to acknowledge that, while teachers form the bulk of the work force in Education Queensland—they are at the chalk face, if you like, in classrooms—their work is supported by a number of staff in other classifications. These include public servants, grounds care janitors, administrative assistants, teacher aides and cleaners. The contribution of all of these staff is necessary for Queensland to reach the ambitious targets we have set ourselves as the Smart State. I congratulate all of those other staff for the work that they do.

In recognition of the work of registrars in particular and in recognising the increased responsibility and workload that some of them have experienced, I recently announced the government's support for upgrading a number of positions of registrars across the state. As a result, I am delighted to announce that registrar positions in around 130 schools will be upgraded to a higher salary classification level. The review committee consisted of representatives of the QPSU and the department and involved consultation with the Principals Association, the Registrars Association and the QPSU.

In December 2000 the government also approved the conversion of certain casual administrative officers to permanency and ungraded some AO2 administration officers to AO3 registrars. These decisions recognise that the administration of schools is becoming more complex and demanding and recognise the additional responsibilities that are now being performed by a number of those officers. I am particularly pleased about the conversion of a number of casual staff to permanency. Many of those administration assistants employed by the department are women and a number of them had been employed in a casual capacity for up to 10 years. The teacher aide classification career structure will provide a career path for teacher aides and will allow them to access higher job classifications. Discussions are ongoing between Education Queensland and the relevant unions about the implementation of the teacher aide classification structure project. The department is also examining the roles of some staff in district offices and central office for positions at AO3 to AO8 levels.

The review is timely in order to ensure that the proper relativities exist and are maintained to retain quality employees to those positions in district offices and central office. Many teachers and school administrators have previously followed career paths into positions in district office and central office. It is important in my view that this continues to be an attractive option so that we can gain their experience in administrative, management and policy areas of the department's work. The government is committed to ensuring that the extra money we have committed to attract and retain our best teachers does not inadvertently act as a disincentive for staffing movements and interchanges between schools, central office and district offices.

The range of measures that I have outlined are designed to recognise and value the work of Education Queensland employees who are not in frontline teaching jobs but are critical to ensuring a high standard of education across the state. I conclude by taking the opportunity again to recognise their work and to congratulate them.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: Can you give some specific examples of the work being done in schools as part of the Partners for Success Program referred to on pages 1-17 and 1-18 of the MPS?

Ms BLIGH: I am pleased to give an outline to the committee of this program and some of the work that is happening in schools as an example. It is in my view a very exciting initiative designed to improve the education and employment outcomes in Education Queensland for indigenous Queenslanders. It is above all a recognition that Education Queensland, despite the best efforts and well-intentioned motives of a great many people over a great many years, has not yet got it right. Our past work in this area needs a different approach. We need to work more closely in genuine partnership, particularly with indigenous communities, if we are going to improve literacy and numeracy, to increase attendance rates at schools and, importantly, to provide indigenous children with real life chances.

Partners for Success involves 35 trial schools across the state. There is an agreement with the Queensland Teachers Union to consider flexible human resource practices where appropriate in those schools. The Partners for Success process is based around a new way of doing business called negotiation tables. These tables bring together all the stakeholders in a community to discuss issues in a collaborative way to ensure the best outcomes for the whole community. It recognises that there needs to be a commitment from all sides to improve education and that teachers are only one part of the equation. It is built on the idea of shared responsibility. Education Queensland is developing compacts with communities to guarantee that things improve. These compacts are based on a charter which I will be launching this Friday at Beenleigh State High School. The launch will be an historic event, marking a real sea change in Education Queensland's approach to education in indigenous communities.

Key commitments of the charter include a commitment from Education Queensland to developing genuine and equal partnerships to jointly improve the engagement and involvement with the school and the community; to improve school attendance, literacy and numeracy, standards of education and school completion; providing and retaining high-quality and experienced school leaders and school teachers; ensuring that teachers are well prepared for the experiences in remote communities for teaching indigenous children in cross-cultural environments; and ensuring that curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment are geared to providing indigenous students with high-quality education and equal outcomes to

those achieved by students in other state schools. It will also ensure that the curriculum that is used reinforces students' cultural identity with open and transparent reporting to parents and communities about student achievement, provide training and development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and improve whole-of-government service delivery.

On the ground, what all of that means is that, for the first time, for example, Education Queensland has formally acknowledged that for many children living in the cape and remote communities standard English is their second language. This is now being incorporated into teaching methods and curriculum. For the first time, teachers are being asked if they want to teach in a remote school rather than being forced there via a transfer. Last year was the first time this method was tried. We have already seen a significant increase in the number of teachers volunteering to go into those communities. There are many other examples. It is a very exciting program.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: How do these goals of Partners for Success correspond with the findings of the longitudinal study for 2010?

Ms BLIGH: It is important for us to view Partners for Success as a program that is not being run in isolation and which is very much about achieving the targets that we have set for ourselves through 2010, particularly in relation to retention rates and achievement. It corresponds with some of the learning that we hope to take into our program and policy development as a result of the findings of the longitudinal study. Partners for Success is a commitment by the government to the continuous improvement of education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and employees. It is supported in two key ways: there is policy work at the central level to create an enabling environment for schools and communities, along with operational work at the school level that is more responsive to local needs. Partners for Success combines aspects in that regard of both the longitudinal study and 2010.

A key strategy of 2010 is to ensure that all students have the right access to education, leading to learning outcomes consistent with their potential. In my view, 2010 will fail if it only provides opportunities and outcomes for some of the students in our system. The real challenge in making it work is making sure that all students—regardless of where they live, regardless of their cultural background, regardless of their ability or disability—have an opportunity to participate in those opportunities. The improvement, for example, of literacy standards is an important strategy of 2010. The fact that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students do not speak standard English as a first language contributes to the poor literacy and numeracy performance percentages of students in those communities. These students are faced with the dual challenge of having to learn a second or foreign language at the same time as learning to read and write. We are refocusing our curriculum efforts and our teaching methodologies to acknowledge that in classrooms where that is an issue. It is a significant first step forward. As I have said, it is the first time that it has been formally acknowledged by Education Queensland.

There is very exciting work being done in this regard at Jessica Point State School in Napranum, which I visited last week. The school there has developed world-leading literacy teaching programs using both home language and English. There is international interest in using it. It is based on information technology. It is a very exciting program which involves elders working with the school to develop the language program. That is now being looked at by other providers in other countries that are working with English as a second language. Another important focus in

2010 is on the creation of stronger foundations in the early years of schooling. We believe that those foundations will enable literacy and numeracy concerns to be highlighted at an important time in the education of teachers.

Elements of the longitudinal study in 2010 addressed the importance of support of school environments, along with a focus on the ability to teach the diverse range of students which exist in Education Queensland schools. It is important for us to acknowledge that one of the four planks of consideration in the longitudinal study related to the response to diversity in school classrooms. I think Partners for Success is an integral part of that.

The CHAIRMAN: Page 1-38 of the MPS indicates that extensive research has been undertaken into the international student market. What are the findings of this research? What is Education Queensland doing to act on the outcomes of that research?

Ms BLIGH: The export of education and training services in Queensland currently contributes approximately \$500 million in export earnings to the state's economy and is one of the state's top 10 export earners. The presence of international students alone is estimated to provide around 5,000 jobs. In addition to economic benefits, there are obvious social benefits, including an enriched educational experience for our own students in schools and universities where they work side by side with international students, an enhanced ability for our graduates to operate effectively in a multicultural society and in a global economy, and the development of international networks.

Cabinet recently approved the Queensland Education and Training Industry Export Strategy, which was based on the outcomes of a PricewaterhouseCoopers research project last year into the international student market. The study recommended 120 courses of action, which include a commitment to a whole-of-industry approach in terms of culture, attitude and cooperative actions, including product development. It is important to recognise that in this area Queensland has done very well. You would have to say that \$500 million in export earnings is a very significant contribution. That has been achieved despite the fact that there has not really been a coherent, strategically focused policy that brings together all of the various individual institutions into one coherent strategy. That is what this new strategy is about.

There was a recommendation that will see the immediate adoption and support of a new industry structure directed towards eliminating the, as I said, existing fragmented approach, providing industry leadership and developing effective networks and pathways between sectors. It is an investment by both the industry and government in promotional activities that are about selling Queensland as an educational destination regardless of what particular institution you might be thinking of attending and an investment in expertise and industry redevelopment over a sustained period of time. PricewaterhouseCoopers was of the view that if we adopted a significant change in approach to this area of export earnings we have the capacity over time to double our export earnings, and that is the target that has been set. The strategy will involve an investment by government and other partners of up to \$10 million over five years, but we believe that with that kind of investment and a strategic focus on this area of activity in the Queensland economy we can earn another \$500 million per year and create literally thousands of jobs.

Education Queensland currently plays a very active role in attracting overseas paying students to Queensland through an initiative jointly funded with Queensland universities that promotes Queensland as a destination. We hope to take that work

into this strategy that has been chaired by the Premier's Department and bring together a range of industries and higher education institutions and schools into a single coherent strategy.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for government questions has expired.

Ms LEE LONG: The Tablelands electorate is rural based and is suffering in the ongoing rural downturn. School communities are very aware of the need to focus their children on the future and are particularly aware of the need to have quality information and communication technology in their local schools to assist in achieving this. All schools within my electorate now have access to the Internet. However, concerns relayed to me relate to the ongoing costs of maintaining the computer networks in schools. It seems that many schools have ageing computer hardware and the replacement costs are a major concern. I am aware of statements made in the MPS at pages 1-11 and 1-13. I am also aware of plans to allocate \$8 million to provide schools with computer technicians and technical support, \$5 million for new computers and \$2 million for teacher development. What long-term government strategies are in place or are proposed to assist schools and communities in maintaining the integrity of the ICT networks and further developing both their administrative and curriculum networks?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for her question and her interest in the roll-out of information and communication technologies into our schools. It is increasingly a very significant part of our educational effort. The sorts of concerns that have been relayed to you about the cost and the effort involved in managing the equipment that has been rolled out already, as well as keeping that equipment as up to date as we possibly can, has been raised with me on a number of occasions by schools in both urban and rural and remote areas.

⁰¹⁸ We are very aware of the problem. It was one of the issues identified in the process that led to the development of the Queensland State Education 2010 vision statement. A better response to the whole challenge of information and communication technology is one of the priorities of that vision. To that end, the cabinet has established an interdepartmental working party that comprises representatives from Education Queensland, Premier's, Treasury, the new portfolio of Innovation and Information Economy and the Department of State Development—it is required to report back to cabinet later this year—to look at a number of the things you have raised. Its terms of reference include learning outcomes in relation to student-computer ratios; establishing benchmarks; models of service delivery, which goes to some of the questions you have raised; professional development requirements; costs and time; possible sources of funding for a further investment in ICT; and the wide-area network options and bandwidth and development of local area networks, as well as providing technical assistance.

When I go out to schools—I am sure you find the same thing in your electorate—I find that there is a wide diversity in schools, between schools that have bought equipment and schools that are leasing equipment. Some of the leasing deals are better than others. Some leasing deals come with some very good arrangements in relation to help desk support and maintenance. Others do not have perhaps quite the same. Much of this has developed as a result of decisions taken at a district or school level. I am not convinced that we are getting the best value, given the market share that an organisation such as Education Queensland has.

So we are aware of the issues. I cannot pull the solutions off the shelf, but I am happy to reassure you that this is one of our priorities and it is one of the major

projects we are looking at over the next 12 months. I think we need to think creatively about it. There will be different solutions in different places. For example, in some of the remote areas it may be that we need to work with other government agents in towns, such as Health or the police. In those remote communities where there is a school, a hospital and police, we could look at sharing technical support and maximise it for everybody.

Ms LEE LONG: I acknowledge the planned expenditure on students with disabilities. Community members in my electorate have expressed concern over the lack of funding certainty for SWD programs in schools. What government strategies are in place or are planned to ensure that SWD programs in schools have a secure, ongoing resource base?

Ms BLIGH: I am delighted to say that the allocation of funds in this year's budget is a recurrent allocation of funds to further assist schools with the challenge of meeting the needs of students who have a disability. The whole question of how we can create schools that are inclusive environments, resource schools to maintain that and keep in place the best programs that you are referring to has been a vexed one for some time.

The question of how we allocate the resources and how we make sure that they are going to the most needy students in the most needy classroom environments has taxed the system in the past. My predecessor put in place a consultancy. It is called the Shead/Power report. Bob Shead from BDO Kendalls and Professor Des Power from Griffith University last year undertook a significant research project looking at our current allocative models.

I am not sure how familiar you are with the process whereby a child is ascertained and, depending on the level of ascertainment, certain resources might then follow. The key findings of that report basically endorsed the ascertainment process as a process that works reasonably well to identify the needs of a student but does not necessarily work that well in identifying what support that student might have to match with their need. They have recommended that we look at a system of profiling.

While we have identified that a student in a particular classroom might be an ascertained level 5 or 6, in the past we have had a sort of set allocation and therefore they get a certain sort of resource. I have spoken to a number of parents as well, and they are looking for more flexibility, recognising that two different children in two different schools can have exactly the same disability but have very different needs, depending on what kind of class they are in, how well they have adapted to their disability or what other resources or supports might be available.

So they have recommended looking at what they are calling profiling of each student, and we will be trialling that this year in a number of schools to see whether that helps to get it right. As I have said, there is a significant allocation of funds in this budget. That is a recurrent source of funds. There has been in the past by many governments investment in one-off projects. These funds are not a one-off project. They represent ongoing assistance in schools.

Ms LEE LONG: Education therapy services to support access to educational programs for SWD are very thin on the ground in rural settings. It is difficult to fill permanent part-time therapy positions in non-urban locations. This seems like a duplication of services if we consider the fact that Health also provides medical therapy to school-age children. Are there any plans to combine these services so

that a complete therapy service can be called on by the community to support their children? This could then rule out any overlapping or duplication of services.

Ms BLIGH: I endorse your comments. My previous portfolio was Disability Services and I was very aware that in any given town there are therapists funded by Disability Services, by Education Queensland, by Health and in some cases private providers who may or may not be being accessed. In some cases, some of those therapists are being paid half time by one government department and half time by another and working with the same child.

It seemed to me that it was important for us to have a look across government at whether we were getting the best outcome in those places and look at whether, with the investment we were putting in, we were really getting the sorts of results families expected. Often what they are looking for is seamless provision. They do not necessarily want to be going to different settings.

I have referred that matter to the CEOs working group for human services. In government the directors-general of various departments meet in particular working groups, so for example the CEOs of economic portfolios from time to time get together. There is a human services working group of CEOs, and that question of the provision of therapy is on its agenda. I look forward to hearing where it is going. As I said, from wearing my previous hat I am very aware of that issue and I am not convinced that we could not do better at the customer service level.

Ms LEE LONG: All state schools are held accountable for the efficient and effective management of public resources and curriculum programs. Education Queensland requires all schools to provide information and documentation in line with their accountability practices. Small school communities indicate to me that their principals and administration staff need more assistance to comply. How are you going to address this situation?

Ms BLIGH: You are talking about assistance to comply with the requirements from head office to provide certain information?

Ms LEE LONG: Yes, with small schools. They do not have enough resources.

Ms BLIGH: I referred earlier in answer to a question from a government member to the recent upgrade of positions in a number of schools across Queensland and the decision by government to make some casual positions permanent. That was done in recognition by government that there is a considerable impost on schools in this regard. We have high expectations, so we have to work to, for example, make sure we have permanent staff and recognise and keep those good people we have got, because sometimes they are pretty thankless tasks, particularly if they are being done by people who are in casual employment.

Can I also say, though, that there is always a question in any large organisation about whether the data you are requiring from time to time is the right mix of data. The director-general has recently put in place, after a bit of a summit of people at school and central office level around the question of what data we need and when and how we need it, an information technology board to look at whether we are asking for the right material and whether we are getting that right. I think that is something you have to constantly keep under review. Again, I assure you that we are aware of the issue. Obviously information and communication technology, as it gets further rolled out into schools, will assist in some of those areas. Sometimes I wonder whether it does not make it more of a burden. I hope not.

Ms LEE LONG: I notice in the MPS that there is an enormous amount of money being allocated for ICT. I feel that information technology and computer skills are not worth anything if people do not have literacy skills. How does the money being spent on ICT and literacy strategies compare?

Ms BLIGH: The budget this year makes a total allocation in relation to literacy strategies of approximately \$148 million. That goes across a number of programs, including Reading Recovery; the Year 2 Diagnostic Net, including intervention; appraisal of students with learning difficulties; year 5 intervention; and a range of other areas, including literacy and numeracy and teachers. Fifty per cent of teacher aides' salaries are in that area.

I can appreciate what on the face of it might seem like a very significant allocation into ICT, but when you take into account that in the public system we have more than 1,300 schools, and some of them are in the most remote parts of Australia, it seems to me that we need to make it a priority to actually get all of those schools into a situation where they have the basic requirements.

You referred earlier to all of the schools in your electorate gaining access to the Internet. That is not the case yet for every school in our system. We believe that we will be in a position to say that by the end of this year. So some of the funds you see in this budget will be bringing other schools in other areas up to the standard that schools in your area currently enjoy. It is important, I think, that there are some minimum standards around this and it is important for all schools to have access to it.

These issues are not separate. If we look at what literacy means for children who are currently in primary school and what literacy will mean for them when they are in the workplace, it is the view of current educational thinking that those children will have to have what we are referring to as multi-literacies, if you like. They will have to be competent in reading computer screens, in using technology, in accessing and designing web pages and all of those sorts of things. In many ways they are now being regarded as equally important. When we say 'literacy' we mean reading, writing and comprehension, but we mean reading a screen as much as reading a book, or using a keyboard as much as using a pencil.

I said earlier that not all schools are on the Internet. All schools are on the Internet, but not all schools have classrooms connected to the Internet. That is what we will be achieving by the end of the year. I would not like to see us completely separating ICT and literacy. There is a significant investment in literacy, but there is an important and significant investment in ICT. They are interrelated and will increasingly be interrelated.

Mr LESTER: I refer to the enormous growth of the Capricorn Coast, which has increased in population by approximately 1,400 people per year. We will have in excess of 40,000 people by the year 2020. Indeed, we are the third fastest growing area in Queensland and the eighth fastest growing area in Australia. Has provision been made for a second high school on the Capricorn Coast, which will be needed in the not-too-distant future? Do we still have the land that was obtained for this second high school at Taranganba? Generally, where are we with planning for the future for a second high school on the Capricorn Coast?

Ms BLIGH: I am not aware of the circumstances surrounding land that might have been purchased in the past. I would suggest that in the interests of accuracy we take that question on notice. I am happy to provide that. I think we would be in a position to do that by the end of the session.

I refer to the question of managing growth in parts of Queensland. There are the two growth corridors that are often spoken of—the Gold Coast to Brisbane and Brisbane to the north coast—but there is significant growth occurring in most of our regional centres. Matching our facilities to that growth in time is a challenge for the system. There is no doubt about that. I can certainly assure you that I am very well aware of that challenge.

On the Gold Coast at the moment we are looking at a local area planning process that will see us hopefully better equipped than we have been in the past to say, 'What is happening over the next 10 years?', not just, 'What is happening in each budget?' We need to be able to plan significantly further out than we have in the past. If that process turns out to be quite a useful one, I will be looking at how we can maybe utilise that in other regional areas of high growth. Are you comfortable with me taking on notice the question about the land?

Mr LESTER: Absolutely. I just issue the invitation: if you are in the area, you would be very welcome to come along and have a look at the very well-run high school we have there currently—and other schools.

Ms BLIGH: I have already been into some of the Rockhampton high schools, and I look forward to going into others in that Yeppoon and Keppel area.

Mr LINGARD: I refer to the controversial Flagstone high school, which I have always disagreed about.

Ms BLIGH: It is not even in your electorate, I find out.

Mr LINGARD: I know.

Ms BLIGH: That is why you disagreed.

Mr LINGARD: That is true. However, the Education Department has now built a new high school on a site and is now going to move it in one year's time. If that is not the most ridiculous waste of taxpayers' money, I do not know what is. We have a situation of a high school being built on a site which I have always disagreed with, with the proposal that it will shift for 2003. That is one of the most ridiculous wastes of money and I would like an explanation for it. I still believe it is in the wrong spot. It is being built in a spot which does not have one shop or any sort of public facility. This has been an argument of mine for a long time, and I would say it is a complete waste of money. If anyone is going to come forward to answer, I would also like to find out whether they are saying that the developer still has to contribute money and infrastructure, and I would like to know what that infrastructure is.

⁰¹⁹ **Ms BLIGH:** Okay. You had a question on notice on this which clarified that the developer is not required to contribute financially to the construction but has agreed in principle already to provide land. There is finalisation of discussions about the boundaries of that land, but the lot has been chosen. It is not unusual for new schools to have a number of relocatable buildings as their first instalment while the final permanent structure is completed. In terms of further detail on what you are asking, it might be useful to ask Tom Mould to come and address the questions in relation to the staging of the implementation of the school.

Mr MOULD: With regard to Flagstone, the previous minister approved a consultation process and planning process for Flagstone. As you know, there was some considerable conversation between the Flagstone community and the Jimboomba community. The major issue that required resolution was the location. It has been through a number of debates and conversations with local government, with local communities, and particularly the Jimboomba community.

Ms BLIGH: And that is not going to change. I can clarify for you, Kevin—and Tom—that after that long debate, the location of this school is not going to change.

Mr LINGARD: I really just want to know why it is being moved in one year's time after starting next year.

Mr MOULD: A number of submissions from the Beaudesert Shire Council were received from interested parties, and Education Queensland regarded alternative sites for locating the school. Initially, there was a conversation about locating the school on the primary school site, as you would recall. Education Queensland undertook a review and forecast student population for the various areas. At the end of that review, we made a decision that we were best placed on an alternate site rather than the primary school site, and you know where the new site is. That new site required significant work, as there is development going on through the Flagstone area, as you know, at the moment.

We made a decision that it was appropriate, until such time as we had finalised all of the site and land acquisition issues together with the developers and the shire council around whether or not there was going to be a sporting complex on the site, that we build a temporary school to look after the growing number of students who needed a secondary education at that time. Having done that, we were then in a position to plan thoroughly what we were going to do as a permanent school.

In terms of the cost—because we are using the newest state-of-the-art Bendigo buildings, which are a new addition to Queensland from the old relocatables, which you would remember well, these buildings are very, very cheap for us to relocate. In fact, they cost us less than \$30,000 to relocate, and we can put them anywhere in Queensland. They are state-of-the-art, and the cost to the department is minimal compared to not having a well-planned site—a site which was based on an educational brief for the school and which enabled the school community to have significant impact into the final educational and facilities provision for that site.

Ms BLIGH: I think it is important to clarify that the relocatable buildings are going to be on the same site as the permanent school—the permanent buildings.

Mr LINGARD: That is debatable. But my understanding is that the school is being built on the present primary school site, which is not the site where the high school will be built in 2003. So in other words, the school will be moved after one year.

Mr MOULD: There are only parts of the school that would be moved after one year. The primary school site is growing, as you know. The decision has to be made about which parts will be situated where as the growth in the school is completed. The educational profile for the school has been completed. And as with all new school projects at the moment, we have made decisions that we write an educational program first and then make decisions about facilities outcomes. The Bendigo building, as I said, is a very versatile building. It enables us to move it between sites and, indeed, in this case to be able to use it on both sites, if necessary. So the final decision making around that is around the final shape of the educational brief, and that is what we intend to do.

Mr LINGARD: It will hardly be regarded as the ultimate of Education Department planning.

Ms BLIGH: That is debatable. You should talk to the member for Algeester.

The CHAIRMAN: The time has expired for non-government members' questions.

Mr FENLON: Minister, page 1-40 of the MPS outlines the number of students who are enrolled in Queensland universities. How is Queensland going in attracting international students to our universities, and how do these figures break down in terms of domestic and international students?

Ms BLIGH: The latest Commonwealth figures are very interesting. In relation to the academic year 2000 they show 130,100 students enrolled in Queensland universities. Of those, there are just over 112,000 who were domestic students and just over 15,000 who were international. There are, in addition, approximately 2,000 students enrolled at Bond University. As it is the only private university in Queensland, it is not required to report to the Commonwealth. But I think that gives you an indication that the overwhelming bulk of students in our universities continue to be local domestic students.

Queensland universities are obviously attractive to overseas students, not just because of the quality of education that our universities offer, but we offer a climate that is very desirable from the point of view of many other countries in the world. The beautiful surroundings and tourism opportunities are a significant magnet, one on which we want to capitalise.

While the rate of growth in the number of international students is increasing, the rate of growth in the number of domestic students is decreasing. That causes me some concern. The rate of growth in domestic students has slowed from 8.1 per cent in 1996 to 1.3 per cent in the year 2000, while the rate of growth for overseas students has increased from 5.8 per cent to 15.8 per cent in the same period. It is not that there are not students in Queensland who want to go to university—far from it. While international students are fee paying and can grow at whatever rate the universities decide and the market will bear, domestic places offered and Commonwealth funding to universities are intrinsically linked. For many, the Commonwealth is squeezing universities so hard at the moment that the number of places offered has not kept up with the growth and will see us slip back very rapidly among the cohort of students wanting to study at university.

The number of young people in Queensland is projected to grow by nearly 10 per cent by the year 2006. You will see the sort of data that the member for Keppel was referring to before. Some of that growth will be occurring in our regional cities and towns. But there has been no growth in the number of available places in Queensland since 1999. That was the basis of the recent call by our government for an increase of 15,000 funded places in Queensland universities. We made that call in a submission to a federal Senate inquiry into the capacity of public universities to meet Australia's higher education need.

For the first time in 20 years Queensland's participation rate in higher education has finally reached the national average as a result of a state and Commonwealth deal which ended last year. We cannot, in my view, let that slip back. If the number of places does not increase with population growth, within three years Queensland's participation rate in higher education will drop back to unconscionable pre-1994 levels, when Queensland was the hardest state in which to get into university. I think that would be a tragedy, and even more so for regional Queensland, where interestingly 40 per cent of all students now attend university courses.

Mr RODGERS: Minister, as part of a five-year strategy mentioned on page 1-39 of the MPS, does Education Queensland have plans to assist East Timor in its development?

Ms BLIGH: I am pleased to inform the committee that Education Queensland has been very active in assisting East Timor in the provision of education services to its young people as it goes about the business of building its nation. Export education and building education partnerships with neighbours is a key part of our vision as a government for Queensland's Smart State.

The Premier travelled to East Timor last year and gave a commitment that the Queensland government would provide support to Timor during its reconstruction period. As a result, two volunteer teachers who are staff of Education Queensland are now in place in East Timor: Ms Vivian Bampton, deputy principal of Kingston State High School; and Ms Kathy Symmons, an Indonesian language teacher from Harristown State High School. They are both already there, and I intend to visit them while I am leading a government delegation to East Timor next week.

The volunteers are using their experience and knowledge to support local teachers in East Timor in areas such as teaching methodology, English language development, curriculum and administrative policy development. The support of these volunteers builds on other assistance already provided, including curriculum and donated school infrastructure. The Townsville education district, for example, provided 200 desks and chairs, blackboards, plus 48 boxes of books and writing materials to schools in East Timor. They were shipped to Dili by the Thuringowa Rotary club in January and have been dispersed to local schools in the new East Timor.

As I alluded to earlier, I will be in East Timor next week heading a delegation to further the assistance being provided by the Queensland government. I will leave this Sunday with a delegation that will include representatives from the Queensland University of Technology, the Department of State Development, the Catholic Education Commission and Education Queensland. On behalf of the Queensland government, I will visit schools, the university and TAFE and hospital and meet with the East Timorese interim Minister for Social Affairs, Father Filomeno Jacob, and the Director-General of Education to discuss opportunities for cooperation in education and training development. I will also meet with the Division of Trade and Investment and hold talks with representatives of the United Nations operations section, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the East Timor transitional administration and the United Nations transitional administration of East Timor, plus the Australian Mission and AusAID.

The Queensland government is already providing a range of support to this fledgling nation in our region, and I am confident that this delegation will create further opportunities and links for Queensland to provide support and investment and to build education links. It is through delegations like this one that the Queensland government will continue to encourage those links. As an example of the goodwill and building community links that exists between Australia generally and Queensland in particular in East Timor, the member for Stafford, Terry Sullivan, will also be travelling with the delegation to deliver an electricity generator to the community of Balibo. Mr Sullivan has been a strong supporter of the government's efforts to assist East Timor and has been active as part of the joint initiative between Kedron Catholic parish and the chaplains of the Enoggera army base to get a new generator to the border village of Balibo in East Timor. Some would say I am brave to be taking Terry Sullivan, but Terry Sullivan and a generator are going to make for an interesting trip.

Mr RODGERS: Minister, at page 2-3 of the MPS the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies advised that they are conducting a restricted trial

of a certificate in post-compulsory education. How does this trial propose to assist students with special needs?

Ms BLIGH: As you would be aware, at the completion of their post-compulsory studies, that is, years 11 and 12, most students in Queensland receive a senior certificate. This certificate can record a broad range of results in terms of standards in statewide syllabuses or study area specifications. It can also record nationally accredited vocational education and training. For some students, however, with special needs they either receive no certificate at all or one that shows little about their achievements. These students participate in highly individualised learning programs, and reporting their achievements requires the development of curriculum and assessment supports and a highly flexible reporting format.

I am pleased to say that the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies has identified as a priority a project to put in place a new certificate of achievement in post-compulsory school education, which eventually will ensure that all students completing their post-compulsory school education receive a quality certificate regardless of the nature of their achievements. To have comparable integrity and credibility with the senior certificate, it will also require quality assurance procedures. The individualised nature of the new certificate requires new developments in assessment, reporting, comparability data collection and associated information technology. That will be done through a restricted trial in a limited number of schools in the first phase of implementation. The trial phase will begin in a limited number of schools for students in year 11 in 2001 who are completing school at the end of 2002.

The marking and recording of achievement is important for all children and young people, and it is important that all—whether they have special needs or not—have their achievements and completion of 12 years of schooling recognised formally, and I am very pleased to see this project go ahead. A number of parents of students who have a disability or a special need have raised with me their concern that their children without a disability have this and their children with a disability often do not and that those children feel that very strongly. So I am delighted that the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies has taken this on as a priority, and I look forward to the results of the trial.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: I note that at page 3-1 of the MPS in the report by the Queensland School Curriculum Council mention is made of a discussion paper titled *Student Achievement in Queensland* released by the government. Why was this paper considered necessary and have there been any outcomes from the process?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for the question. As she would be aware, students in those days left school to enter a very different world from the one in which their parents grew up. This world requires new skills for work and new skills to take an active role in the community. The way that schools are organised and the pathways that students now take has changed as a result of those new demands. You would have heard me earlier in answer to earlier questions refer to the high number of students who are now involved in VET subjects or school-based apprenticeships and who are taking different courses through schooling.

The government decided last year under my predecessor that it was timely to consider whether the authorities that support learning in schools are organised in the best way to meet those demands. These authorities are the Queensland School Curriculum Council, the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies and the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority. As a government and as a

community we felt that it was time to ask ourselves: are we doing the best that we can to support students as they move through school to further study and an active role in our community and in workplaces, and do our current statutory arrangements help all students to achieve the best outcomes?

The discussion paper looked at, first, some of the educational challenges and key factors that hinder student achievement. It then invited discussion on some possible models for curriculum development, assessment and certification in Queensland that may improve the chances for students to complete school successfully. There has been extensive discussion and consultation with stakeholders from education sectors, employment and training, the statutory authorities and relevant industrial unions. The consultation identified broad agreement of the need to reform the roles and functions of the authorities to create an integrated framework of teaching, curriculum assessment and reporting that defines the essential areas of learning, the affiliated modes of assessment and the standards and assurances about student development at key points of schooling.

Stakeholder feedback has now been collated and it is available on Education Queensland's web site. There have been several options discussed by the stakeholders and their feedback is being assessed. I am currently considering the results of that feedback and consultation and I look forward to taking a recommendation to cabinet in the near future about the future shape of our statutory authorities. Obviously, I look forward to the comments of my cabinet colleagues, but I think that we will see some reshaping as a result of the discussions that the community have had about this.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: So in relation to Pathways, what initiatives are being pursued to provide new opportunities for students, particularly in the area of vocational education and training?

Ms BLIGH: You might have heard me refer earlier to an interdepartmental working party in relation to information and communication technology in answer to a question by the member for Tablelands. There is an additional working party that was established in 2000 to investigate strategies to increase the proportion of students completing year 12 or equivalent. That is, as I have said a number of times today, one of the key goals of the 2010 vision particularly for state education for the next 10 years. We are very aware that if we are to increase the number of students completing year 12, then we need to look at improving the pathways through schooling and pathways for senior students through school, their transition to further education and training, and their transition to employment opportunities. As I said, it is consistent with the 2010 strategy that identifies this as one of our priorities.

In the take-up of vocational education and training, I have to say that Queensland has much to be proud of. We currently lead the way in the take-up of school-based apprenticeships. Over 50 per cent of the national total of school-based apprenticeships are happening right here in Queensland and a high percentage of those are happening in some schools in our north coast area. Over 2,500 Education Queensland students are currently enrolled in a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship in over 180 schools and across more than 20 industry areas. This year alone, over 1,500 new Education Queensland students have begun an apprenticeship or traineeship. It is a significantly different picture than schooling even a decade ago.

Nearly 100 Education Queensland schools are enrolled to deliver stand-alone VET subjects. In many cases, these are in the three nationally recognised work education certificates developed by Education Queensland in conjunction with the

two other schooling sectors and industry. These are designed to improve a student's employability. The VET subjects in schools program involves students studying vocational education and training linked to the national training framework through key pathways outlined in the joint policy statement on VET in schools. This statement was launched jointly in February 2000 by the Ministers for Education, Employment and Training from all states and the Commonwealth.

The three VET pathways supported by the ministerial statement are VET subjects developed by the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies; school-based apprenticeships and traineeships; and stand-alone VET subjects. As I said earlier, over 60 per cent of all year 11 and 12 Education Queensland students this year are enrolled in one or more VET subjects. It is clear that an increasing number of students and their parents are looking towards vocational education and training as another pathway through the years of schooling and into post-school study. The interdepartmental working party on Pathways is looking at building on some of those results and some of the work that is already happening and looking at how we can further enhance what I think is a growing expectation in the community that there will be multipathways to meet the multineeds of students and, hopefully, keep more of them involved in either year 12 or its equivalent.

Mr FENLON: So in relation to improving those pathways and retention, are there any other projects under way that you can inform the committee of?

Ms BLIGH: Yes, I am delighted to have a chance to talk about this a bit more. I think that it is one of the most exciting areas of work that the department is engaged in. As I have said, over the next 10 years we have set ourselves a significant target of increasing our year 12 completion rates, or year 12 equivalent completion rates, from 68 per cent to 88 per cent. To do that, we need to reduce the number of young people who are disaffected with school and who leave without completing a program that will provide them with a sound basis for future opportunity.

Notably, less than one-third of Queensland year 12 school leavers proceed directly from school to university. For the remaining 73 per cent, the rigour and comparability of year 12 assessment and certification in some cases is only marginally relevant. I have appointed Mr John Pitman, a former director of the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies, to undertake a review of senior certification. The review will investigate options for a more flexible and relevant certification process that better reflects today's diverse educational pathways and the demands of students and parents. That review will also look at ensuring that assessments are confirmed by recognised quality control procedures and ensure that learning assessment and certification are integrated.

The project will be inspired by the fundamental values of more people learning and having that learning recognised officially, learning rather than schooling, flexibility in all institutional settings, a student-centred focus, recognising the central role of the school in the facilitation of learning and identifying standards derived from high-quality learning and assessment. The project will examine a senior certificate that records achievement in completed courses at AQF2 and above level; records achievement in studies completed in school or with providers with whom the school has a formal arrangement; is issued only to students who meet minimum requirements for achievement and breadth of qualities of studies; is issued perhaps twice yearly; and allows students to, what we call, bank achievement—for example, an opportunity so that students can complete some studies, work part-time or full time and then return to complete the rest of year 12 or equivalent without penalty—and to get credit for the work that they have done already.

Education Queensland will work in close collaboration with the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies on the project. For anybody who knows Mr Pitman, they know that he brings more than 20 years of experience and expertise in curriculum development and certification through his previous work with the board. I was very pleased that he agreed to accept the challenge of this project and I am very confident that he will bring to it a great deal of rigour, innovative and lateral thinking to help us in our quest for better and articulated and more accessible pathways.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for government questions has expired. I call the member for Robina.

Mr QUINN: Minister, how many teachers were employed last financial year as part of the government's agreement with the QTU to provide an additional 800 teachers over four years?

Ms BLIGH: There were more than 200 teachers employed over and above growth last year, of course, to meet the needs of students with a disability. The QTU has accepted that 147 of those teachers will go towards the 800 figure.

Mr QUINN: And there are 135 this year?

Ms BLIGH: That is right. So you will see from that that the bulk of the delivery is in the two outyears. As you are very well aware, there is a negotiated process by which those student teachers will be allocated. Both parties are comfortable and in agreement with the loading of those teachers into those two outyears to make sure that we get it right.

Mr QUINN: Earlier today you mentioned the fact that the non-government sector would benefit by an additional 9 per cent in terms of increases in funding from state funds. I may have missed it, but did you also provide similar figures for the state schools in terms of an increase in state funds?

Ms BLIGH: Yes, it is a 9.1 per cent increase. That is mentioned specifically in the MPS. Obviously, it is off a much, much larger base, but it is 9.1 per cent

Mr QUINN: That is all I need.

Mr LINGARD: As we move towards self-management and self-governing, there is obviously going to be criticism of that devolution of responsibility. I have heard your answer about the handing out of political brochures to schools. But let me extend that argument to the salesmanship in computers and people having to fill out forms about whether they want computers. Just how much responsibility are you going to allow to school principals, in the angle of commercialisation, in handing out those sorts of brochures? Obviously, funds are received by the school if a computer company does it. I have one from Future School Mathematics and English CD-ROM computers. Just how much are you going to allow in the school system?

Ms BLIGH: There are really two elements to the question. Let me take, firstly, the question of how much responsibility we devolve to principals. I think that it is important that principals are recognised as leaders in their school communities and it is important that the system expects them to act responsibly like responsible leaders. I am confident that the overwhelming bulk of our principals make school-based decisions in conjunction with senior representatives of their staff and representatives of parents at the school. I think that we can be confident that principals can make very high-level decisions about what happens in their schools.

The other part of your question is really about the level of commercialisation or commercial activities that happen in schools and you have given one example, but

there are numbers of opportunities presented to schools, often on a weekly basis. If you are somebody who is marketing a product to children, whether it is McDonald's hamburgers or computers, then schools are a potentially very, very lucrative advertising target. I think that we have to walk a fine line—and I know that the member for Robina is aware of how fine the line is between giving schools opportunities to derive revenue for all kinds of worthwhile purposes while at the same time protecting schools and children in schools from exploitation by people who have only a commercial interest at heart.

It is a fine line, and we have to date in Education Queensland had some policy parameters around that. In relation to a couple of issues that have been brought to my attention, I have not been satisfied that the parameters are rigorous enough to give principals and schools some clear direction in relation to the sorts of questions and sorts of opportunities that are being presented to them. I have raised this in a number of discussions with the director-general, and the executive management group this week set up a working party to look at a more rigorous policy around commercial activities in schools. So I look forward to the outcome.

I think that it is always going to be one of those areas, though, where it is not going to be possible to list the sorts of 'This you can do and this you can't do,' because the next day someone will come and offer something that is not on the list. I think that it is more that we have to put in place some checks and balances in the system so that we give principals and school communities a reasonable degree of flexibility, but we have some checks and balances built in so that we can be certain that the system is operating reasonably and would meet public interest expectations.

Mr LINGARD: It is obvious that a Gold Coast school, which might be in a strategic position, might be able to receive quite a lot of finance from putting a great billboard on the corner of the school grounds. If it is that you are going to continue to allow the principals to make that decision, that is the difficulty that obviously you are going to get into very soon.

Ms BLIGH: It is interesting that you should raise the question of a sign, because that was one of the very examples—not at the Gold Coast but at another school—that raised the question for me. Obviously, the question of whether or not a sign can be placed is partly affected by the views of Education Queensland in schools about commercialisation, but it would also have to comply with various planning guidelines of whatever council or shire by-laws might exist.

But it is equally true—and I think that it is also important to recognise in terms of that example—that because of their location, there are already schools in our system that get benefits that other schools do not. In my own electorate, East Brisbane State School, because it happens to be next door to the Gabba, gets a very lucrative source of income from car parking on match days. That just happens to be because of where they are. Other schools in our system happen to have a particular arrangement with local markets. A school outside Toowoomba brought that to my attention when I was at the Toowoomba community cabinet. Because of a range of historical reasons, they run the local market and derive significant funds from that. Those situations will always arise in a system as big as this. However, I do think that the commercialisation of schools is something about which parents feel quite strongly and we need to be sensitive to those feelings.

⁰²¹ **Mr LINGARD:** Can I ask you about the future of school councils and where they sit at this particular time?

Ms BLIGH: There is no intention by the government to make any changes at this stage to the existing arrangements in relation to school-based management. The legislation establishes that quite clearly. For the foreseeable future, that is the policy and legislative framework that will govern school councils.

Mr LINGARD: Will the program be expanded for school councils?

Ms BLIGH: That depends on the options that schools choose. That is a question for schools. Schools make a decision under the legislation of what sort of model they want. Yes, it is quite possible that some schools will make that decision. It is equally possible that they will not. It is not something that either I or the department has control over.

Mr LINGARD: Are you or the department prepared to assist those P&C associations that are finding difficulty covering litigation costs?

Ms BLIGH: This is a question in relation to insurance for P&Cs?

Mr LINGARD: Yes.

Ms BLIGH: I am very familiar with this issue. You would be aware that P&Cs, as organisations that operate in the public sphere, are required to take out insurance to protect themselves from liability and to protect people who might be, say, injured at a P&C fete or P&C activity. It is important to recognise, firstly, that they have to have insurance.

The cost of that insurance, however, is rising and I am concerned about the effect that that might have on the capacity of P&Cs to undertake their business. The representatives of the QCPCA have met with the director-general to talk through this issue. The director-general is currently working with them to look at how we might address the concerns about rising costs. I think that we have to explore a number of avenues. It is not something that is easily resolved, but it is something that I think we have to dedicate some time and thinking to. We have to work collaboratively with the QCPCA to ensure that its organisations are not the subject of unnecessarily onerous requirements. On the one hand they have to be insured but, like all who take out insurance, many of them pay big premiums and never have a claim made against them. However, when they do have a claim made against them, they are often very big and significant claims.

Mr LINGARD: I ask you to take a question on notice referring to the Education Department's maintenance contingency program of \$50 million over three years, which is managed through the Department of Public Works. When the question was asked of Public Works the other day, the advice was that this money is in the Education budget. Can you give a breakdown of spending for 1998-2001 and the next \$50 million by each state electorate.

Ms BLIGH: The Triple R program is an election commitment this year, so there will not be figures for 1998 or 1999. We have a three-year program which is the Triple R program. The final decision about which schools will be in the program has yet to be made. I am unable to give that to you on notice at this stage. I would be very happy, when I have made the decision, to provide it to you on an electorate breakdown.

Basically, the program looks at the three Rs, which is repainting, reticulation and reroofing. Officers of Education Queensland and Public Works have been working together to identify the schools that would be in the first phase and my office has been provided with a submission from the department. I have not signed it off yet and I have not had a chance to look at it in detail. At this stage, it does not have any status. As I said, I am more than happy to give you a commitment on the record

here that it will be made absolutely public. It is being suggested that I should clarify with you whether you are talking specifically about the election commitment for the Triple R maintenance program or the ordinary maintenance program of the department?

Mr LINGARD: That is what I asked Mr Quinn. I was talking about the previous maintenance program.

Ms BLIGH: We can take that on notice. You want it from 1998 to the financial year that is being reported on, so the 2000-01 financial year?

Mr LINGARD: And can I ask for the present one as well, the Triple R one?

Ms BLIGH: As I have said, we do not have the breakdown as yet. I have not signed it off. I have not approved it. It does not exist yet. When I have signed that off, I am very happy to give a commitment on the record here—and it might not happen for two weeks—to forward that to your office. It will be public information.

Mr LINGARD: I return to the curriculum area. I refer to the literacy and numeracy funding from the Commonwealth government, which is part of the new strategic assistance for improving student outcomes. This funding was aimed at improving learning outcomes of students who are educationally disadvantaged. Where is the funding provided in the new Education budget?

Ms BLIGH: Which funds are you referring to?

Mr LINGARD: The educationally disadvantaged funding that was coming from the federal government.

Ms BLIGH: That is part of the recently signed off Commonwealth-states agreement?

Mr LINGARD: On page 1-3, is it just the \$148 million.

Ms BLIGH: You are talking about the \$148 million? That is not all Commonwealth funds. Are you looking for a breakdown of what part of the \$148 million is Commonwealth?

Mr LINGARD: Yes.

Ms BLIGH: We can take that on notice. You would have heard me talking in an answer to the member for Tablelands about the breakdown of the \$148 million, and I can provide that to you now if you like, in terms of how each part of that is broken down into things like the Reading Recovery Program, the Year 2 Diagnostic Net, appraisal, resource teachers in secondary schools, support teachers for learning difficulties in primary schools, et cetera, if that is useful. It does not provide which parts of all of that are Commonwealth. We can take that on notice and come back to you. Did you want that?

Mr LINGARD: Yes, please. Minister, can I come back to the longitudinal study, which I would hope is not going to replace all other studies like the Luke reports and all of those. I am concerned about your opening statements this morning about literacy and numeracy, and the smaller class sizes. Are you saying that smaller class sizes would not help literacy and numeracy programs?

Ms BLIGH: I am not saying anything of the sort. I am saying that I noticed the press release that you put out and the public statements that you made on the release of the longitudinal study. I think your headline was, 'Its elementary, class sizes make the difference.' All I was saying is that it would be an erroneous conclusion to say that the longitudinal study investigates in any way the effect of class sizes on educational outcomes, whether it is literacy, numeracy or any other

indicator that you might choose. In fact, the longitudinal study makes no reference at all to class sizes and their effect. It was not something that was investigated by the researchers. It is certainly only one thing that we would take into account, but it is important to recognise that we have never had such an extensive look into what is happening in our classrooms. I think we would be making a big mistake if we ignored that study. It certainly will be one of the tools that we use to assist our thinking in terms of future directions, but only one.

On recognising that class sizes do have the capacity to impact on learning outcomes, our commitment is clearly evidenced by this government's commitment to allocate 800 new teachers over and above growth, and some of those specifically in reference to our desire to have smaller class sizes in some schools. It is certainly not accurate to say that that was my assertion. My assertion was that the longitudinal study provides no evidence one way or the other. It was not a subject of investigation by that study.

Mr LINGARD: But you would have to agree that smaller classes, especially in years 1, 2 and 3, would help in literacy and numeracy.

Ms BLIGH: Why do you think that the government is funding them? Of course we think that they make a difference. Of course we think that they are one part of the jigsaw puzzle. That is why the government has put money into putting more teachers over and above growth. Once you put teachers over and above growth, that is where you see a reduction in class size.

Mr LINGARD: Where do you intend to put those 800 teachers if you are saying that you are aiming them at smaller classes, especially in years 1, 2 and 3?

Ms BLIGH: The 800 teachers was a commitment made as part of the enterprise bargaining agreement and the terms of the allocation of the 800 teachers is specified in a clause of that agreement. The 800 teachers are to be allocated into three areas: students with disabilities, reduced class sizes and behaviour management. Obviously, there is a link between all of those things.

Further, the allocation of those teachers would be done in conjunction with the Queensland Teachers Union in a collaborative effort, because it was part of resolving an industrial dispute at the time. There is a steering committee that meets regularly to look at the allocation of those teachers. There was an agreement that the first tranche of the 800 would target the needs of students with disabilities and improving our assistance to those students. That is the question that the member for Robina referred to earlier, that is the 147 teachers accepted by the QTU as the first instalment, if you like.

The MPS makes it clear that we anticipate that at least 135 of the 800 will be allocated this year. It is clarified in one of the notes to the tables, I think it is note 6 in the staffing table on page 1-8 of the MPS. It clarifies that for the purpose of this document we have allocated the whole 135 into the primary output, but that is really for convenience. We have parked those numbers there subject to further discussion with the Queensland Teachers Union and officers of the department. It may well be that we might come back next year and say that some of those 135 went into primary and some went into secondary. The note makes that clear. We had to record them against one or other of the outputs and that is where they have been recorded for the sake of openness and accuracy in this document.

I am unable to say at this stage where they will be allocated. It is clear that, with 1,300 schools across the state and 800 additional teachers, if we dispersed them everywhere it would have very little effect, frankly. There have been discussions

with the QTU about how to make those extra teachers have an effect in the schools that really need it. I am happy to report next year, after those discussions.

Mr LINGARD: As I move around, it is obvious that maths is one particular area where we are short of teachers. What are we doing to overcome the problem with maths teachers?

Ms BLIGH: You will have heard me talk at some length this morning about the election commitment that we made to put in place centres of excellence for teachers in science, maths and technology. That was a recognition that we need to boost our efforts in maths. There has been a lot of emphasis on literacy and numeracy, but maths, beyond basic numeracy skills, science and technology are three areas where the field is changing significantly and it is changing very rapidly. As you would know, for many teachers it might be anywhere from 10 to 20 to 30 years since they did their original qualification.

The centres of excellence in science, maths and technology are a direct recognition by our government of our interest in boosting our effort in that regard. Those centres will be providing professional development for teachers in those areas. But it will also provide funds for, as I said earlier, relief staff so that teachers can take up those opportunities. Also, it will be providing intensive remedial work in science and maths for students who are struggling in those areas.

We are very aware that eight centres of excellence will not cover the state, but we think it is a very significant step in the right direction. It was an election commitment. We made an election commitment for six centres and I am very pleased that we will be delivering eight. I am very hopeful that, in their early implementation, we will see significant improvements in those areas.

The schools that will be the base for those centres will be expected to sign up to service agreements that will have very clearly specified performance targets. I will be expecting to see evidence within a couple of years of not only involvement in those programs but also improved achievement and also evidence of improved retention and enrolment. We are trying not only to improve the achievements of those students and teachers who are currently involved in it but also to excite and inspire those students who have not, in the past, perhaps seen science and maths as an area for their activity to consider taking those subjects further into high school.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for non-government questions has expired. I call the member for Greenslopes.

Ms BLIGH: I am just wondering if I could beg the indulgence of the committee. I meant to do this at the beginning of non-government members' time. Can I clarify one thing for the member for Beaudesert that was asked earlier in relation to the living away from home allowance scheme. I wanted to clarify that the living away from home allowance scheme has four component allowances. They are the tuition allowance, the travel allowance, the disability supplement and the remote area allowance. It is only one of those components that is under review, which is the tuition allowance. That is designed to compensate tuition costs incurred by isolated students when they attend non-state boarding schools.

Information is currently being sought by Education Queensland as part of the review to indicate the number of students who are receiving full tuition fee scholarships—that is, they are not paying the basic tuition fees and do not need to be compensated or reimbursed for them—and the number of students who are paying reduced fees through part scholarships. The information also should reveal some of the circumstances in which these scholarships are being granted by

schools. Our concern is only about that one component and we would be looking at the equity of the provision of that. I am happy to keep you informed about it, but I just want to clarify that it was not the whole scheme, just that one component of it.

Can I clarify something in terms of the question on notice that you are seeking in relation to the maintenance program? As you are aware, the electoral boundaries have changed since 1998. Can we do them on the original boundaries and then the new ones rather than back-map old boundaries? So the 1998 figures will be on the 1998 boundaries and the 2001 figures will be on the 2001 boundaries? That is fine?

Mr FENLON: At page 1-3 of the MPS under the heading of 'Learning' you deal with funding for students with disabilities. Can you describe how Education Queensland has been able to provide support to these students?

Ms BLIGH: Education Queensland has provided and will continue to provide a range of services and support for students with disabilities, including programs in special schools, primary schools, preschools and secondary schools. As stated at page 1-3 of the MPS, the Beattie government will be providing \$22.8 million for this year in extra initiatives for students with disabilities. This includes more funding for teachers and teacher aides at a cost of \$15 million in 2001-02 and each year thereafter. This funding also includes a \$5 million component for capital works. To date in 2001, more than 200 teachers were employed with an additional 3,732 teacher aide hours per week contributing to the support of approximately 1,300 additional students with disabilities. Three of the 49 special schools in Queensland are included in the 38 schools chosen for the phase one New Basics trial. We are very interested to see the outcomes in relation to the New Basics curricula and the opportunities it might provide for children with disabilities or special needs in our mainstream classrooms and special schools.

In addition to that \$22.8 million initiative, under the tertiary in-service support program 135 teachers receive support to gain postgraduate qualifications in disability through university studies. This support was provided in a number of ways. There was payment of HECS or university fees for teachers upgrading their skills, provision of five teacher relief days per subject for teachers enrolled in this program, and provision of relief days where prac days are a requirement of the course. Teacher training is also being offered in the autistic spectrum disorder through statewide workshops, and a new self-paced course for teachers in physical impairment developed by Education Queensland will be offered through Griffith University.

The final component of the \$22.8 million initiative this year is a further payment of \$2.8 million to Queensland Transport to extend transport assistance to a further 500 students with disabilities. That is specifically in relation to a recommendation that was made by the report that I referenced earlier in answer to a question of the member for Tablelands—the Shead/Power report. Over and above those commitments, the previous Beattie government committed \$35 million over four years in 1998 to fund an initiative called Education for All. That program will see \$10 million into the system this year.

We understand that there are many challenges for our students with disabilities and their teachers and families, but we believe that there has been a significant improvement in investment in that area this year.

Mr FENLON: What particular steps is Education Queensland taking in response to students with a disability?

Ms BLIGH: In answering that question, I might talk a bit more about the outcomes and the considerations of the Shead/Power report, because it was a very extensive review of our response to the needs of students with a disability and our obligation to create inclusive learning environments for students.

The review was conducted last year and finalised, I think, at the end of last year after a number of months of research by the researchers. The key findings of the review included recognition that the current ascertainment process identifies educational need reasonably well but is not an appropriate way of identifying necessarily the support needs of students with disabilities. The current resourcing methodology is an improvement on the previous approach that appeared to lead to significant discrepancies and inequities.

Resource allocation processes for students with disabilities could be changed to better reflect the needs of students with disabilities. The review did not become aware of any overlaps with other government and non-government agencies that provide services to people with disabilities, although it found that there was a need to improve coordination between the various service providers.

A departmental working party and interdepartmental task force considered all of the recommendations and a number of the recommendations have been implemented or are in progress. Some of these include meeting the needs of indigenous students through the appointment of three experienced statewide special education representatives who will specialise in indigenous special education and additional short-term support for schools with high indigenous populations to complete ascertainments of those students where relevant and appropriate; the appointment of 13 additional statewide ascertainment representatives to enhance the ascertainment process; intensive teacher development in monitoring requests for ascertainment; raising teacher awareness of the ascertainment process; and developing and trialling, as I mentioned earlier, of profiles of individual students that recognise the educational and personal needs of students. For example, the ascertainment currently only determines the level of a person's disability on a scale of one to six, with six being the most severe. Ascertainment does not currently recognise the educational and personal needs of students. For example, toileting is an issue for some students. Through the new profiles we expect that this will change.

We have also looked at promoting and publicising the ascertainment guidelines. They are now available on the Education Queensland web site. Education Queensland has initiatives to address issues and concerns in the identification, operations and funding of students with disabilities. These include reviewing, as I have said, the ascertainment process, and also reviewing students whose ascertainments have expired—there is a number in our system that we have discovered this year whose ascertainments have expired and we need to look at whether that needs to be continued; developing and trialling of profiling; reviewing the current levels of resourcing for students with autistic spectrum disorder and speech/language impairment; and doing all of that with much better consultation with stakeholders.

Mr RODGERS: I refer to government question on notice No. 9. Can the minister outline how this federal legislation is likely to impact on Queensland schools?

Ms BLIGH: This is a question that is now exercising a great many members of the public and local communities, and no doubt many of you will hear about it as you walk around your schools. When I was at Ayr State High School the other day

teachers raised this question with me. There is a growing feeling of concern in the community.

This budget records an increase of 10.8 per cent over last year's budget for recurrent education expenditure, with significant amounts of that going into our state education system. Minister Kemp, however, has introduced new Commonwealth legislation in late 2000 that significantly increases the amount of funding to state and non-state schools each year from now to 2004. The immediate impact of the legislation, however, is a skewing of the funding from the federal government away from state schools. Commonwealth funding of state schools has increased by 5.2 per cent compared to 26.7 per cent for Commonwealth funding to non-state schools. I think it is important for us to all understand the subtleties here. The Commonwealth government is very keen to assure us that it is spending more on public schools, and that is absolutely right; it has increased the funding to public schools. The subtlety here is the rate of increase to the non-government schools versus the rate of increase to the public system.

To give committee members a picture of the Queensland government's record on this issue, the Queensland government funding of state schools has increased by 9.1 per cent this year, while funding to non-state schools has been increased by the Queensland government by 9.5 per cent from 2000-01 budget levels. Whilst there is some difference it is minor given the different bases that they are coming off. But what you see is relatively similar levels of growth in increases to those sectors.

The Commonwealth legislation has an immediate and inequitable impact and is having that already on Queensland schools. If it is allowed to play itself out over the next three to four years, in my view we cannot underestimate the serious damage that will be done to public education. This year, of the more than \$1 billion provided by the Commonwealth to Queensland 34 per cent is provided to state schools. These schools educate around 73 per cent of Queensland children. Sixty-six per cent of Commonwealth funds is provided to non-state schools who educate the remaining 27 per cent of the state's students. The introduction of this legislation and the way that the federal minister particularly has chosen to conduct it, I think, threatens to reignite the very divisive debate that a number of people here will remember about state aid to non-state schools that I thought was settled 30 years ago. It would be a great tragedy if that was allowed to be reignited. The Premier wrote to the Prime Minister in November 2000 expressing his concern about it. He indicated clearly the Queensland government's view that we actively support the right of parents to exercise choice over schooling for their children. We are not prepared, however, to stand by while public education is massively short-changed under a disingenuous guise of choice by David Kemp.

I would be saying—and I have said it to federal coalition members—to the state coalition that it will be increasingly necessary over the next six months as we lead into a federal election to identify whether you support David Kemp's initiatives. A show of hands? I do not think we can underestimate it. In Queensland more than any other state, except perhaps Western Australia—and everyone can talk about choice—there are many, many parts of the state where there is no choice. The only provider is a state school or a public school, or in some cases there might be a public school and a Catholic school. But if you are not a Catholic there is no choice. So the strength of our public system and the continued maintenance of that strength, particularly in regional, remote and rural Queensland, cannot be underestimated.

Mr RODGERS: I refer to Budget Paper No. 4 and note the large capital commitment being made to Queensland. Can you please provide details of the progress of major capital projects across the state?

Ms BLIGH: The 2000-01 Capital Works Program is expected to fully satisfy the government's performance requirements. Capital outlays for the current year will be \$235 million, which is up from the projected \$214.6 million last year. Of the total for last year, \$5.6 million was to be provided from disposal of assets. A number of sales previously identified were not completed within the year, thus reducing the amount available to the total capital program by that amount last year. The disposal of assets not achieved in 2000-01 will be pursued in the current year. It is difficult to predict where that might lead, but we hope to have better success this year.

The expenditure program for 2000-01 is expected to be within one per cent of the mid-year review target of \$214.6 million adjusted for reduction in asset sales. This compares very favourably with the previous years of this government's record. In 1999-2000 our Capital Works Program was 0.64 per cent over budget. In the year before that, in 1998-99, it was 0.9 per cent over budget. I am very disappointed that the member for Robina is not here, but I think it is important to point out to the committee that it compares very favourably to the two years prior to that. When the member for Robina was sitting in this chair, his record was a 7.91 per cent overspend in 1996-97 and a 14.4 per cent overbudget expenditure in the year prior to that.

It is abundantly clear that this government's performance in getting its capital works budget spent but being on budget, and where possible on time, has been far superior. I will certainly be looking for that sort of performance in this coming financial year.

The 2001-02 program includes a \$134 million investment in four new schools, with further staged work at 12 others. Over 120 additional classrooms will be ready for the commencement of the new school year. The new schools are being built at Calamvale, in the electorate of the member for Algester; in Flagstone, just outside the electorate of the member for Beaudesert, as we have heard; and North Lakes and Pacific Pines, on the north of Brisbane and on the Gold Coast.

The Capital Works Program also continues the Beattie government's commitment of \$141 million over three years by providing \$54 million to support the Secondary Schools Renewal Program. The 14.4 per cent variance under the previous coalition government was an underexpenditure; 7.9 per cent was an overexpenditure. Either way, we want to be much closer on budget and we expect to see it within one per cent variance either way.

There is a further \$10.7 million for the Cool Schools program and \$7 million to acquire new employee accommodation. Earlier I referred to the importance of good-quality accommodation for teachers.

⁰²³ **The CHAIRMAN:** You mentioned the Calamvale P-12 school, and I am very pleased to see its establishment in my area. I wonder if you can inform the committee members about the concept and opportunities offered by the new P-12 sites, Calamvale included.

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for the question and I know of her interest in the project in her area. The P-12 school in concept is gaining in popularity in not just Queensland but also Australia and overseas because of its perceived ability to provide seamless education to children across the P-12 years of schooling. P-12 schools offer classes from preschool to year 12 in a single school environment.

Schools that are separated can work cooperatively to coordinate curriculum offerings, teaching programs, special needs services and information sharing, thereby achieving a seamless P-12 delivery.

Traditionally, difficulties with students sometimes occur in the transition between different schooling sites and models. Some students cope very well with those transitions. We know that others can experience a period of what is referred to here as 'unproductive learning time' as they make that adjustment. If we are talking about improving retention, there is growing concern that we are asking young people to make one of the most significant transitions of their lives at a point where they often experience the traditional volatility of adolescence, hence the P-12 concept. The student information that a school has is often rediscovered by succeeding schools. For a student who is experiencing difficulty, that can sometimes result again in a loss of learning time.

Benefits accrue indirectly in that school resources previously directed to supporting students whose difficulties have been compounded by divided schooling can hopefully through the P-12 concept be directed at positive outcomes across the entire student population. Opportunities offered by P-12 schooling include that these schools are in a strong position to shape a continuous personal development program that supports student needs throughout their stages of their development; it may be able to offer greater flexibility to adjust curriculum offerings to students catering for their changing needs; an increase in gauged learning time as year 8 students do not have to start afresh in a new school environment with new teachers; the opportunity to collect data, including assessment results, student preferred learning styles, and the development of relationships over an extended period of time may assist in the provision of curriculum activities more closely suited to the needs of individual students; and increased knowledge of students and a greater opportunity to longitudinally map appropriate learning paths and recognise the need for appropriate intervention across what has traditionally been seen as primary or secondary.

I want to stress at this point that the P-12 schools that are being put in place very much are a trial for Education Queensland. We will be looking closely at the evaluation of those trials before necessarily expanding the concept statewide or rushing in. We think it is important to make sure that these schools are getting results. Most of these schools are designed so that there are potentially up to five subschool precincts, if you like: a junior, a middle and a senior school. Sometimes added to it, particularly in the case of Calamvale, are sporting and community facilities that are part of the school but also part of the community.

The CHAIRMAN: As you know from your visit to Calamvale, families, students and staff are very excited about the new school. One difficulty, however, has been the negotiations between Education Queensland and the Brisbane City Council over the responsibility for internal and external water, sewerage and road infrastructure. I just wondered whether these infrastructure matters have been resolved and whether the roads and footpaths will be in place for the much awaited school opening in January 2002?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for her question. I noted earlier her interest in this school. I am very aware that the relationship between Education Queensland and the Brisbane City Council on the question of the provision of external infrastructure has been, shall we say, a bit of a bumpy path over the last 12 to 18 months. I am as keen as she is to resolve it as quickly as possible.

The Calamvale project is a very exciting development and it will see the construction of stage 1 of the P-12 college. At the beginning of 2002 the community college will commence in its new premises with preschool to year 8 facilities. There has been extensive consultation with the Brisbane City Council around the master plan for the site. I have met personally with the Lord Mayor, Jim Soorley, and one of his staff to resolve the issue of roads. When the Lord Mayor and I met, we agreed that officers of the BCC and officers of Education Queensland would negotiate the extent of the external infrastructure and sit down and actually do the hard work rather than argue about who had to do what, and discuss what was the scope that we were talking about so that we would be in a better position to negotiate who did what. There has been a longstanding problem between councils across Queensland accepting some responsibility for external infrastructure when we have significant developments of what I regard as social infrastructure. It is my view that schools should be treated very differently to developers who are putting in place, for example, a new resort. Social infrastructure like schools is something from which communities, including ratepayers of city councils, benefit significantly.

I am pleased to say the finalisation of cost-sharing arrangements are being negotiated as we speak. I would like to take the opportunity to place on the record and to assure the member and her school community that all roadworks will be completed before the school opens in 2002. This school is designed to be a hub for the community. Hopefully it will go far beyond being just a school and many members of your community will utilise the significant sporting and other community facilities at the school, whether or not they have children at the school. While I cannot tell you exactly who is paying for what, there is an agreement between me and the Lord Mayor to have this sorted. The roads will be in place by 2002.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for government questions has expired.

Mr LINGARD: The quality of textbooks has always been a problem. Certainly in the area of mathematics it has been a specific problem over the last three or four years. In the last couple of months you would have known of one particular person in mathematics who is always concerned about the quality of the particular textbooks. What are you doing to ensure that those people are satisfied with the quality of their textbooks? Who will make those judgments now on the textbooks that are provided to students?

Ms BLIGH: I am not familiar with any specific concern being raised about the quality of textbooks. It may well have been correspondence that is yet to come to me. The materials provided to classrooms for the implementation of the curriculum, whether it is mathematics, science or any of the other key learning areas, or materials provided for the New Basics trial are provided from a range of avenues throughout the system. The Queensland Schools Curriculum Council is currently working through syllabus materials for a number of areas including mathematics. There is also AccessEd, which is a separate unit of the department that provides online curriculum material. They are available for schools. The syllabus implementation unit of the department also prepares material and curriculum materials for schools. In each of those areas there are boards of experts. The Queensland School Curriculum Council has a statutory role to develop materials and to make sure that they are put into the school.

As I said earlier, the role of statutory authorities in the development of curriculum materials and in assessment and certification is currently one that is a question for government, and we will be looking at it resolving one way or the other in the next six months. Whether it is the status quo or another shape of state

authority, there will continue be a statutory authority with overall responsibility for curriculum development and development of syllabus materials. I have just received a note. I understand that there has been correspondence. It has actually been referred to the Queensland Schools Curriculum Council for advice. I am happy to make sure that that gets back to you as soon as possible.

Mr LINGARD: Is that on maths?

Ms BLIGH: That is the maths question you referred to specifically.

Mr LINGARD: I am not referring so much to SOSE; I am referring to particular maths textbooks which are being used, and there has always been a criticism. Obviously maths and science would be a necessary component under the Smart State. Can you guarantee that maths and science will be done by all students to year 10?

Ms BLIGH: I recently released, as I referred to specifically earlier, the first curriculum framework for years P-10 that Queensland has seen. The curriculum framework requires every school to have a curriculum plan, and that curriculum plan must spell out core learning outcomes for students in a number of areas. Maths and science are two areas that are required to be part of the curriculum plan.

Mr LINGARD: I was probably asking specifically will there be a guarantee that the Education Department will take all students through to year 10 covering maths and science, or will they only do a little bit of maths and science at any time? Obviously the question is: is science compulsory to year 10?

Ms BLIGH: In the interests of accuracy I might ask Ken Rogers if he could perhaps come and give you more detail on that in relation to science.

Mr LINGARD: Maths is okay.

Ms DIESSEL: As the minister has indicated, she has just approved the curriculum framework for years 1 to 10 for all Queensland schools. In that policy all schools are required to provide for students' learnings from maths and science in all core outcomes, all key learning areas including science and maths and level statements to level 6, which is from years 1 to 10.

Ms BLIGH: Which really just confirms my answer. Thank you for that. I just wanted to make sure that I was accurate on that. So, yes, the curriculum framework requires schools basically to be teaching maths and science from years 1 to 10.

Mr LINGARD: I was probably asking can it be said that all students now going to year 10 will do science to year 10?

Ms BLIGH: That is the intention of the framework that has been released. At this stage it is a framework. I released it during the first week of the school holidays. It requires all schools to put in place a curriculum plan. It may be part of their curriculum plan that over the next couple of years they will have to put in place strategies to ensure that that is possible. As I understand it, some schools would not be in a position to do that straight away.

Mr LINGARD: With schools making all of these plans at their own level, how are you going to maintain consistency across the state, and what is the program to maintain consistency?

Ms BLIGH: I think we need to distinguish between consistency and uniformity. We do expect that different schools will be doing different things and that the curriculum plans will be developed in consultation between principals, staff and parents. I do not necessarily expect to see uniformity, but we do expect consistency. Schools will be required to report on the implementation of the years 1 to 10

curriculum framework. So they will be required to report centrally on what they are doing to implement the framework. In the same way as any other policy roll-out, we will expect schools to do it, and I am very confident that schools will accept the challenge.

Mr LINGARD: As I move around schools I see a need for their curriculum to change and their programs to change and maybe to share learning facilities. This may mean a change in lunch hours and morning teas. What discussions have you had with the Teachers Union about the ability of schools to change programs, to change things like lunch hours?

Ms BLIGH: I have not had any specific discussion with the unions on that level of detail. That level of detail is generally handled by departmental officers. There has not been any material brought specifically to me. I might ask the director-general to make some comments in relation to conversations that he might have had with union representatives in detail.

Mr VARGHESE: It is handled on a school-by-school basis in relation to those issues. The union has generally tended to work with us on areas where it is justified. There are schools that will move in that direction, but we do not have an industrial agreement that allows us to vary the hours across-the-board. At this stage we would have to take that on a case-by-case basis.

Mr LINGARD: Would you be receptive to a school's requests to change its lunch hours?

Mr VARGHESE: If we receive such a request we would be consulting with the QTU and taking it on a case-by-case basis.

Ms BLIGH: It is certainly true, though, that there are a number of schools who have already implemented some very flexible hours through this case-by-case arrangement. You may well be aware of some schools where seniors are starting very early in the morning, finishing at lunchtime and then going off and working at part-time jobs or studying. Some of them are enrolled in university courses, et cetera. Yes, the pathways challenges will certainly challenge some of our work practices, and the union is aware of that.

Mr VARGHESE: I might add that we, in fact, have specific arrangements with respect to the school council, as you would be aware, but also with the workplace reform arrangements that involve regular consultation with the union.

⁰²⁴ **Mr LINGARD:** I previously asked a question on notice about the staffing allocations and the percentages used to allocate staffing to a school. The answer I received did not make any reference to what happens to the figure after the decimal point when the number of students is divided by the number of teachers allowed. Will someone give an explanation as to what happens to the 0.4 when a school should have 29.4 teachers?

Ms BLIGH: There are probably two parts to the answer. Firstly, there is not a document that says that if there is only 0.2 of a student you have to take away the resource. There is a degree of flexibility within certain parameters, and that is resolved at a district level. I think we would want to leave it because each school will always have its own circumstances. But we do actually have 29.4 teachers. There are part-time teachers in the system. When we refer to staffing figures in the budget papers, what we are talking about is budgeted full-time equivalents. There are many more actual bodies out there than budgeted full-time equivalents because we do have part-time resourcing in our classrooms.

Mr LINGARD: But you would understand that if there are a whole stack of 0.9s around the state it would be quite obvious that someone is losing and maybe someone is gaining. There is criticism out there as to what happens when there is 0.9 of a teacher, because you do not get a full-time teacher, nor do you get a part-time teacher.

Ms BLIGH: Again, situations like that would be resolved flexibly at the district level. Some 0.9s might end up being a full-time teacher. That is what I was saying before. There is not a document which says that if it is 0.9 it cannot be full time. There is a degree of flexibility. You see it operating differently at different districts from one school to another on a year-by-year basis. So there is a degree of flexibility. Some 0.9s would become full-time teachers. Obviously a 0.2 is not going to become a full-time teacher in very many circumstances.

The districts get together and schools work collaboratively to work it out. So it is not a competitive environment in which they are all looking after themselves, but they have to understand that anything that they get will be taken away from another school. A proposal is put formally through the district to the relevant assistant director-general with responsibility for that area. So there are some checks and balances in the system and there are opportunities to make sure that there is some equity within the flexibility.

Mr LINGARD: I understand that discussion takes place and decisions are made, but we all realise the discontent out there when schools drop below 26 and lose one teacher. It seems to me that more and more recently there is discontent in the community about some of the decisions that are being made, especially when two-teacher schools are reduced to one-teacher schools. I also want to ask about school principals. This year is the first time I have seen a group of school principals particularly upset. What processes are in train now to allow those principals to either speak with you directly or speak with the director-general?

Ms BLIGH: This was in relation to the primary school principals report?

Mr LINGARD: Yes.

Ms BLIGH: That report was done by the national body representing primary school principals around Australia. The Queensland branch was actively involved in that. Tom Hardy, a Queensland and president of the national body, played a very active role. That report was released not very long after I became minister. I think it was released in the first one or two weeks after becoming minister. In fact, it might have been the day after I was sworn in. So I immediately sought a meeting with Tom Hardy and had a very extensive discussion with him about the report. In addition to the national release of the report, a Queensland report was released at a function while parliament was sitting. I sent a message of support to those principals for their interest in the resourcing of primary schools.

I do not know if you have had a chance to look at the report; I would encourage you to do so. The report has four recommendations. The recommendations require agreement across all the states and territories and Commonwealth in my view. The four recommendations call for the establishment of national resource standards that will ensure effective delivery, a national review of school resources needs, an independent body to monitor school funding—which is a bit like going back to the Australian Schools Commission—and regulation of competition, including a review of current practices to establish an agreed code of conduct. All four of those recommendations require state and Commonwealth combined action. I gave a commitment to have this report and its recommendations put on the agenda for the

CEO group that services MCEETYA. That was done. The director-general actually put that on the agenda and it is now an item for discussion at MCEETYA, which is the ministerial council and which is meeting next week. It would be very difficult to establish a national body that reviews school resources or to set up a national review of school resources without some agreement from the Commonwealth, which, frankly, I do not think is going to be forthcoming. However, that does not mean that we are not going to put it on the agenda and have an argument about it.

Mr LINGARD: What have you done formally about stress levels for teachers? Obviously there will be more and more cases, whether they be genuine or not, considering the amount of stress that teachers are under as far as preparing curriculum and taking on more of a self-governing role. What is the formal process now in place by the Education Department?

Ms BLIGH: Work-related stress is treated as a work-related illness or injury, if you like, and is dealt with through the formal mechanisms of the WorkCover provisions of the WorkCover Act. We are required as an agency to comply with the provisions of that act. We are very concerned about any rising incidents of stress, because obviously we are concerned to make sure we are providing good quality work environments for teachers. We are also concerned about unnecessary costs related to stress-related absences that could have been avoided in the system.

There are a couple of things that are influencing an apparent rise in stress claims. Firstly, as you would be aware, there have been changes to the WorkCover legislation that actually recognise stress claims. Your government moved to remove that. We put it back. So obviously you would expect that when people could not make a claim, there were no claims. Now that they can, you would expect to see a rise, and that is what is happening. Secondly, the move away from regions to districts has seen a loss of some expertise. As you have gone from a fairly big region—and you would be familiar with the old regional structure—people had an opportunity to work across such a large number of schools that you would get more opportunity, if you like, to encounter serious workers compensation cases and develop expertise in handling them.

It has been recognised by Education Queensland in recent times that through working in some of the district offices you do not have a big enough pool of employees and school environments for some people to develop expertise in claims. Claims are often quite complicated. It is not simply that a person fell over while doing playground duty and sprained their ankle. It is usually much more complex and there is a more complicated set of circumstances leading up to a stress-related claim. There was a review commissioned of organisational health functions which was conducted by independent consultants in the first half of 2000. Arising from that review, there is an increased resource commitment to those functions, that is, an additional \$500,000 provided in last year's budget. The funding was largely devoted to the employment of additional district office-based organisation health specialists. The management of WorkCover stress claims is a major focus for many of those additional resources.

Further enhancement of service provision is planned for this financial year. The focus of the enhancement will be to develop a consultancy service to assist in the management of work-related stress; to provide a consistent statewide set of guidelines and procedures—with more than 30 districts out there we see some inconsistency between the way those things are managed; the development of workplace relations training programs for principals and managers, and to have a much more intensive case management of complex cases. It has to be a

multipronged approach. We will be monitoring it because we share concerns in the system about the health in the broader sense of our teachers.

Mr LINGARD: I understand the problems as far as specialist teachers, but there is no doubt that there is a shortage out there as you go around to the schools. What are you formally doing to overcome the problem of lack of specialist teachers in the areas of speech, drama, theatre and music?

Ms BLIGH: By specialist teachers, are you talking about in specialist subject areas?

Mr LINGARD: Specialist subject areas, yes.

Ms BLIGH: I might call Paul Leitch to the microphone to give you some more detail on that. Obviously our ability to recruit specialists diminishes as we get further away from the regional centres. We have some recruitment problems. The more the specialisation, the harder it is to recruit in some of our remote areas. We are not the only department that has that problem. I will ask Paul to comment.

Mr LEITCH: Our current set of data we have around specialist teachers would indicate that we are tracking reasonably well. We do have a process over a period of time to negotiate with pre-service providers in terms of universities. We also have some programs at the moment which have previously been referred to where we are looking at retraining within particular areas. As part of the MCEETYA task force on teachers supply and demand, a national position has been developed in looking at trying to develop national standards for pre-service around particular areas. The one that we are looking to at the moment that the minister has referred to previously is around the area of maths and science teachers. We believe that the local activities that have been undertaken, both within the state and nationally, will address that.

Ms BLIGH: I took a question on notice earlier about the Commonwealth contribution to the \$148 million literacy initiatives. I am happy to provide you with this information, but I note for the record that of the \$147,814,000 that is going to a number of those literacy initiatives, \$2.643 million comes from Commonwealth funds. So the Commonwealth in that regard makes a relatively minor contribution. The Commonwealth puts funds into the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan of \$100,000 in Queensland and \$1.2 million towards the Learning and Development Centres for Literacy. The year five intervention attracts some Commonwealth funds of \$1.2 million. I will table that table for you.

Mr LINGARD: I also had been referring to a Queensland government document about students at educational risk that had been put out relating to students whose experience of schooling, together with other factors in their lives, make them vulnerable to not completing 12 years. I was also referring to the fact of that money going into those particular programs as well, because there was always a document about students at educational risk. But I am okay about that.

Ms BLIGH: If you do not need any more on that, great. You will find that if you go across all the programs of the department there is a sprinkling of Commonwealth money across all of it. We can certainly disaggregate it for you. There is no attempt in any way to hide that.

Can I go back to a question from the member for Keppel in relation to the Taranganba site. Education Queensland never owned the site in question. It withdrew from a compulsory acquisition arrangement on the site. So it was not that we owned it and sold it but withdrew from it. In terms of future need, we are aware of the growth in the Capricorn Coast area and are working with the local council to

identify future growth corridors. That will drive the need for any new schools and the location of the school. Education Queensland has investigated some likely sites in the area. While it is not on our current five-year plan, depending on those investigations that could change. The nearest school, Yeppoon State High School, has actually seen a decline in enrolments. In 1998 there were 978 students there. This year, there are approximately 900 students. That is not a significant shift, but you could not say it was significant growth.

Mr LESTER: A lot of them are going to private schools for some reason.

Ms BLIGH: We monitor enrolment growth periodically. A new school will be provided, as is always the case, when the need can confirm it. We would certainly be wanting to see more significant growth in that school before we could justify a new school on that site in the immediate future.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for non-government questions has expired. We have one final question from the member for Burdekin before we set you free.

Ms BLIGH: And let me guess. I wonder what it is about.

Mr RODGERS: Minister, you would be aware of the problems at Oonoonba State School. A new school was to be built at Oonoonba. It was originally to be started at the beginning of this year and finished at the end of this year. Is this still the case? Can you let me know when construction will start and the estimated finish date?

Ms BLIGH: I am very pleased to answer this question from the member for Burdekin. I actually drove through Oonoonba the other day. I met the principal of Oonoonba State School. I can assure you that they are very pleased to know that they have had a strong advocate working for them. As you know, there has been a question mark hanging over what would happen with this school. I was very pleased when you consulted with the community and talked to me about what was happening on the ground up there to reaffirm the priority of this project and to ensure its inclusion in this year's capital works program. I am sure you are pleased to see that it will be going ahead thanks to much of the work that you did.

It is a fulfilment of a commitment that was made by the Premier in the election campaign when he released the Beattie plan for Burdekin. I am pleased that construction began on site this week. I think you knew the site had already been cleared, but construction actually started this week. We are confident that we can meet the commitment that the forecast date for completion will be in time for the new school year. I guess you have spent enough time in north Queensland to know that rain could interfere with our time frame, but that will be the only thing that slows this project down, and we do not have any control over it unfortunately. I look forward to visiting the new Oonoonba school with you, Steve.

Mr RODGERS: I would just like to thank you, on behalf of the school community, for listening to their concerns.

Ms BLIGH: It was a pleasure.

The CHAIRMAN: The time allotted for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure for the Department of Education has now expired. Before dismissing the officers, I remind them that responses to questions taken on notice at the hearing are required to be returned to the committee by 9 a.m. on Monday, 23 July. If you are unable to meet this time frame, I would appreciate it if you would notify me and the deputy chair and advise us accordingly. I thank the minister and her officers for their attendance and all of the hard work and sleepless nights that may have gone into this process.

Ms BLIGH: On the matter of questions on notice, I want to clarify an issue so that we all have a shared understanding. My understanding is that there is one question on notice in relation to the maintenance program over the last three years by electorate. That is the only question on notice?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Ms BLIGH: We will certainly have that on time. I thank all members of the committee for their interest in the portfolio.

Sitting suspended from 3.46 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**IN ATTENDANCE**

Hon. G. R. Nuttall, Minister for Industrial Relations

Mr J. McGowan, A/Director-General

Mr R. Seljak, General Manager, Workplace Health and Safety

Dr S. Blackwood, General Manager, Private Sector Industrial Relations

Mr D. Hyde, Acting General Manager, Division of Public Sector Industrial and Employee Relations

Mr J. Marsh, Strategic Budget Manager

⁰²⁵ **The CHAIRMAN:** The next item for consideration is the estimates of expenditure for the Department of Industrial Relations, and the time allotted is three hours. I remind members of the committee and the minister that the time limit for questions is one minute and answers are to be no longer than three minutes. A single chime will give a 15-second warning and a double chime will sound at the expiration of these limits. An extension of time for answers may be given with the consent of the questioner. A double chime will also sound two minutes after an extension of time has been granted.

The sessional orders require that at least half the time available for questions and answers in respect of each organisation or unit is to be allotted to non-government members. Any time expended when the committee deliberates in private is to be equally apportioned between government and non-government members. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask departmental officers to identify themselves before they first answer a question.

The proceedings are similar to parliament to the extent that the public cannot participate in them. In that regard I remind members of the public that, in accordance with standing order 195, any person admitted to a public hearing may be excluded at the discretion of the chair or by order of the committee. The sessional orders provide that a member who is not a committee member may, with the committee's leave, ask the minister questions.

In relation to media coverage of Estimates Committee F, the committee has resolved that still photographs and silent television film coverage be permitted for the first five minutes of each department. My final request is that if you have a mobile phone in your pocket or handbag please check it now and turn it off, and if you need to make a call please step outside the chamber. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the Department of Industrial Relations open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr NUTTALL: Thank you, Madam Chair, I would. It is indeed an honour for me to deliver my first estimates statement to the committee as the Minister for Industrial Relations. I would like to advise the committee today that my acting director-general, Mr Peter Henneken, underwent emergency heart surgery last week and Mr Jim McGowan, on my right, is the acting director-general.

It has been a significant step forward for employers and employees that the Queensland Labor government has sought to establish a single portfolio to deal

with industrial relations issues. The key priority for this government is to create more sustainable jobs for all Queenslanders. It is the priority of my department in this term to ensure that jobs held by Queensland workers are not only safer and more productive but also fairer in a society where the philosophy of a job for life and standard working hours are all but gone.

The state budget this financial year will allow for expenditure of \$86.2 million to fund a range of new initiatives that continue the government's reform plans for workplaces across this great state. These reforms will improve our fair and balanced industrial laws, focus on safer and healthier workplaces and continue to build on Queensland's workers compensation system that only today an NCP review has reaffirmed as the strongest system in this country.

Our biggest challenge will be to keep pace with the dramatic changes we have seen in the past decade in the way all Queenslanders work. By that I mean not just changes in technological innovations but also changes in work patterns, such as the growing number of part-time and casual positions, the growing number of women in the work force and the explosion in the number of working hours a week. That is not to mention the social and economic changes, such as the impact of these innovation and pattern changes on our commitment to our families, to our communities, on our workplaces and in the form of health and safety and in the form of stress or bullying.

I am pleased to say that the Queensland Labor government is leading by example. We have conducted more research into this new work force than any other state in this country. This government is exploring new and better ways to work with employers, employees, unions and industry to address these issues and, most importantly, the growing imbalance between work and family life. With nearly 55 per cent of dual-income families and 45 per cent of sole parents now in the work force caring for dependents, achieving this balance of course will be critical. So more than \$335,000 has been earmarked to establish the work and family unit in my department. This unit will run pilot programs to trial flexible family-friendly initiatives in the workplace, as well as resource the ministerial task force to review the effectiveness of our industrial relations system.

Research has shown that almost one-third of Queensland employees are now working more than 45 hours per week and more than half of these are wage and salary earners. As such, my department has committed nearly \$100,000 to develop industry codes of practice on reasonable working hours. Queensland also currently has the highest rate of casualisation in the country. One in three workers is now employed on a casual basis, and almost 60 per cent of all casuals are women. Balancing of work and family will be just as important for such a growing proportion of the Queensland work force.

In response to these changes, the government introduced unpaid maternity leave for long-term casual employees under its IR Act of 1999. Since then, casual workers in New South Wales and under federal awards have also gained access to unpaid parental leave. To keep pace, we have already announced further improvements to these conditions to give casual employees in Queensland with at least 12 months service with one employer access to unpaid parental leave as well as unpaid carers and bereavement leave. As one of Queensland's major employers ourselves, we recognise that helping our workers helps us to maintain skilled and loyal employees for the long term. Again, we are leading by example.

Last month I was pleased to approve the family package for public sector employees that includes paid adoption leave, one week's paid leave for spouses at

the time of the birth or adoption of a child, prenatal leave and access to long service leave after seven years for family purposes. This builds on existing paid maternity and family leave as well as flexible working arrangements.

In the next few months we will implement initiatives to improve pay equity between female and male workers for comparable work as a result of the pay equity inquiry. \$250,000 has been allocated for the workplace bullying task force, expected to report to the government by the end of this year. I have just a small amount left, if I could seek leave to have that incorporated into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

- \$400,000 will be used to establish a youth advocacy service to provide information, advice and assistance to an estimated 315,000 young people employed in Queensland.
- \$4.5 million will help fund 12 new inspectors in the critical area of electrical safety; specialist investigators to work in regional centres and the targeting of serious hazards or high-risk industries and workplaces.

As for our workers' compensation system, I seek to table a report from page 4 of this morning's Australian Financial Review detailing the National Competition Policy Review of WorkCover Queensland which has recommended it remain 100% publicly owned and operated to protect the interests of Queensland employers, workers and the community.

This review has firmly established that a publicly owned and operated workers' compensation scheme provides the best way to balance the rights of injured workers against employers' needs for competitive and affordable premiums.

It reinforces WorkCover Queensland's performance, under this Government, as the strongest in the country—offering some of the highest benefits to workers while offering the cheapest average employer premiums backed by the strongest financial position of any scheme in the country.

Finally—Queensland workers and employers will have even greater access to information on awards and entitlements.

- \$500,000 will be allocated to upgrade the department's internet technology and telecommunications services through Wageline to keep in touch with workplaces across Queensland.

All of these major reforms and initiatives that I have outlined build upon the work undertaken during the Beattie Labor Government's last term—work that ensured the state's industrial relations system is more balanced and efficient, and will help to grow existing business and attract new investment to the State.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Minister. The first period of questions will commence with non-government members. I call the member for Keppel.

Mr LESTER: Minister, I note that you have extended the reporting date of the external review of the Division of Workplace Health and Safety and the Electrical Safety Office by three weeks. It is now due to report this Friday, therefore not allowing these important recommendations, no doubt with budgetary ramifications, to be addressed by this estimates committee. Have you included a provision in the budget to fund any recommendations of the review that will require urgent expenditure?

Mr NUTTALL: The extension of the date to 20 July certainly was not to avoid any questions by the estimates committee. I want to make that very clear to the committee. It was our intention, as you rightly said, to have that report brought down by 30 June. Mr Crittall and Mr Dempsey, who are conducting that review, approached me a number of weeks ago indicating that more people wanted to have some input into the findings of the review. I therefore granted an extension to allow them to have that finished by the 20th.

In terms of funding any recommendations that may come out of that—I will just say to the honourable member that I will, as a result of the review, take a number of

recommendations to cabinet. In the budget we have allocated an additional \$4 million that will strengthen the government's workplace health and safety services and the Electrical Safety Office services. We have also given an undertaking to employ 12 additional electrical inspectors. So money has been allocated in the budget for that.

⁰²⁶ **Mr LESTER:** Minister, will you give a commitment to the full implementation of all the recommendations of this review?

Mr NUTTALL: I am not going to say today that I will adopt the report lock, stock and barrel. I think that would be unwise of me until such time as I see what the recommendations are. But as I indicated to you in my earlier answer, I will be taking a submission to cabinet on the reviews of both the Division of Workplace Health and Safety and the Electrical Safety Office, and we will have to see what comes of that report before I can indicate whether I will adopt all the recommendations.

Mr LESTER: Minister, I refer to your answer to non-government question on notice No. 4, which states that revenue is to rise by only \$33,000. You state that this is a 3.9 per cent increase. However, it seems to me that this is only an increase of approximately 1.5 per cent—more than 1.5 per cent less than inflation. Why has the base funding for this desperately underfunded section not kept pace with inflation when, as discussed earlier, Queensland has one of the highest deaths by electrocution in the world and the Sokol report pointed damningly at the provision of the resources to enforce this legislation?

Mr NUTTALL: Those figures that you have indicated do not include the additional funding that we are providing for electrical safety inspectors. The exact deployment of those positions will be determined, as I said, subsequent to the report of the independent review of the Electrical Safety Office and the Division of Workplace Health and Safety. And as I said to you, it is an additional \$4 million.

Mr LESTER: I further note that the staffing numbers for the Electrical Safety Office are to have only one extra staff member in the coming year. As a criticism by the Sokol report was the adequacy and competence of the staff, why has this issue not been addressed more urgently?

Mr NUTTALL: The ombudsman, in his report, indicated to us that he wanted us to conduct an external review of the Electrical Safety Office. So rather than us just rushing in and putting on additional staff when we did not know what the new structure would look like, we felt it was more important to conduct the review as requested by the ombudsman.

In terms of the terms of reference for that review, we consulted with the ombudsman to ensure that he was satisfied with both the people who were conducting the review and the terms of reference for the review. As you can appreciate, Mr Lester, the Electrical Safety Office used to be with the Department of Mines and Energy. When the government was re-elected in the last general election that office was brought over to my portfolio. So what we have done is conduct, as I said, a review. When those findings come down on Friday we will have a better idea of what structure we will want to have, and at that time we may or may not need to put on more people.

Mr LESTER: Minister, I refer to your answer to non-government question on notice No. 2 regarding promotional expenditure. What expenditure is to be undertaken on electrical safety in the coming financial year, and how much in total was expended last year?

Mr NUTTALL: We will try to dig that out. But just in relation to expenditure on electrical safety—and that was the question?

Mr LESTER: Yes.

Mr NUTTALL: The current round of advertisements that will be run on the television—I will get that clarified, but my understanding is that that will be funded by both Energex and Ergon and some from the Electrical Safety Office. So that is what we are doing. The campaign is of some significance. There were two advertising campaigns carried out in the 2000-01 financial year—the blitz campaigns for the Division of Workplace Health and Safety public inspections by inspectors on two issues: manual tasks and plant guarding. The total cost was \$20,000 for print advertising in metropolitan and regional press. The only other significant expenditure was \$52,600 on print advertising for the new asbestos regulations for advertisements in metropolitan and regional newspapers and industry journals.

The Division of Workplace Health and Safety employs a manager, industry awareness unit—an AO7 position; a media officer, AO4; a publications coordinator, AO6; and an editor, AO4 to produce *Safety Zone*, which is a quarterly journal that promotes legislative changes and awareness of workplace health and safety. There were no campaigns undertaken by WorkCover during the last financial year, and the public sector industrial relations area did not run any campaigns last financial year, either.

The Electrical Safety Office again came over to my portfolio only in February, and the remaining promotional budget of \$82,000 was transferred to my department on 1 March of this year. There has been no determination as to what moneys we will spend for the remainder of this year.

Mr LESTER: Minister, I note your comments on the Andrew Carroll program where you admitted that the department had failed the families of victims of electrical accidents. What redress will you offer the families who were so badly served, and will you ensure that justice is done?

Mr NUTTALL: The ombudsman made a number of recommendations in terms of what it expected of the department as a result of both those incidents. The department has sent formal letters of apology to both those families. In addition to that, the department has acted in accordance with the recommendations of the ombudsman in meeting certain costs for legal matters that those families incurred.

In terms of the future, again we are conducting the review that has been asked for by the ombudsman. When the review findings come down we will again consult with the ombudsman to endeavour to ensure that we have best practice in Queensland, and our goal is to have over a period as safe an electrical industry as we possibly can.

Mr LESTER: Minister, is there any consideration given in this budget to the reintroduction of the National-Liberal initiative of subsidised safety switches for the estimated 475,000 established homes in Queensland unprotected by this lifesaving device? And if not, why not?

⁰²⁷ **Mr NUTTALL:** I knew you were going to ask me that. Firstly, in the last campaign, as you have rightly pointed out, Mr Lester, there were approximately—my understanding was that about half a million homes did not have electrical safety switches. With the campaign that was introduced, some 25,000 people took up the offer. What we are hoping to do is, of course, to have every home in Queensland fitted with an electrical safety switch. The difficulty is the cost involved in that. In having a review of the electrical facilities that occurred during the

past decade in Queensland, the Electrical Safety Office has concluded that 55 per cent of those would not have occurred if we did have electrical safety switches. Electrical safety switches cost around about \$200 and, in terms of fitting them, somewhere between \$200 and \$300.

As you would be aware, since 1992 the standard for electrical installation wiring has mandated that the installation of safety switches for new power circuits in domestic premises is compulsory. A 1997 study commissioned by the Department of Mines and Energy supported wider uses of safety switches. In 1999, an external consultant's report into electrical safety also recommended the mandatory fitting of safety switches. In April 2001, the sixth recommendation of the final report of the Dempsey electrical safety task force is that all domestic premises have at least power circuit safety switches fitted either at the point of sale or within a phasing-in period determined in consultation with stakeholders and that workplaces as a minimum have electrical safety switches protecting all hand-held or portable equipment supplied through electrical power outlets up to 20 amps with a phasing-in period determined in consultation with the stakeholders.

Although the former scheme was successful, anecdotal feedback was that families with low disposable incomes were not able to take advantage of the scheme. The electricity distributors, both Energex and Ergon, are currently assisting by promoting the benefits and offering a time payment option to their customers. In other words, if they choose to have their electrical safety switches installed, both Ergon and Energex will allow people to pay them off over a period of time with their electricity bill.

So that is where we are at the moment. We intend to put out a regulatory impact statement and to have further discussion and recommendations in terms of how we may do that. One of the views is that people may be required to install safety switches when they sell their homes. So we will have to have a look at that.

Mr LESTER: Could you find out the addresses of all houses built before 1992?

Mr NUTTALL: Do you want me to give them to you?

Mr LESTER: Yes. I refer to page 9 of the MPS that commits to the establishment of a task force on workplace bullying. Minister, will you pledge to submit your ministerial office to review due to the recent allegations of workplace bullying occurring in your office and also the immediate dismissal of any officer found to be participating in this conduct?

Mr NUTTALL: I just hope that you are not going to bully me all afternoon; that is all, Mr Lester. Can I just say that the issue in the paper today was something that arose several weeks ago. It was a matter that was looked at by both the government and by the department. The matter has now been resolved and is at an end. In terms of dismissing people, I think that fairness has to be applied and each case has to be judged on its merits.

Mr LESTER: I note that on page 7 of the MPS the number of certified agreements and workplace agreements has reduced dramatically in the past four years. I understand your party's ideological opposition to these agreements. However, do you acknowledge the need for genuine choice for employees?

Mr NUTTALL: We have in my view the best industrial relations legislation in the country and the fairest industrial relations legislation in the country. Can I just say that I have a strong view, as the government has a strong view, that we very much support collective bargaining. It has been our experience, as you have rightly pointed out, that the number of QWAs has decreased. In the last financial year, the

Industrial Relations Commission approved 664 certified agreements, which covered some 115,800 workers. The total number of agreements in operation as at 30 June 2001 was 1,294, and those agreements covered almost 206,000 employees. Agreement coverage has declined slightly since the December quarter in 1999. However, the number of workers in Queensland covered by agreements should also include those employees covered by an agreement that has expired but has not been superseded, withdrawn or terminated. These agreements are nominally still operating. The department's best estimate is that approximately 356,000 workers in Queensland are covered by agreements which are actually or nominally still operating.

For all workers covered by current agreements, the industry accounting for the largest proportion of employees was health and community services, followed by government administration. The industry which has the largest proportion of current agreements, however, was in construction followed by manufacturing. In Queensland, 24.6 per cent of employees were paid at the award rate; 41.8 per cent were paid by any type of collective agreement, whether they were registered or unregistered in the state jurisdiction or the federal jurisdiction; and 33.6 per cent were paid by an individual arrangement, which included employees on over-award payments and a very small number of employees on registered individual agreements, which was 0.04 per cent of employees with a federally registered individual agreement or 0.05 per cent of employees with state individual agreements.

In terms of the Queensland workplace agreements, as I said, we do not believe that they are a significant feature of Queensland's industrial landscape. In the June quarter to 2001, QWAs were approved for 57 employees, bringing the total number of employees on QWAs to 758. The number of QWAs lodged for approval has declined significantly since the introduction of the Industrial Relations Act 1999. QWAs that have been approved are concentrated in industries such as manufacturing, health and community services, transport and storage. There is some evidence of pattern bargaining where various employers in an industry have used model QWAs to sign up their workers. The most prominent examples were both in child care and real estate.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for non-government questions has expired. I call the member for Woodridge.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: After the last election, Premier Beattie undertook a reshuffle of portfolios, impacting on the industrial relations area. What have been the effects of splitting the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations?

Mr NUTTALL: Thank you for the question. The state government, as you rightly pointed out, has undertaken a reshuffle of portfolios resulting in the Department of Employment, Training and IR being renamed the Department of Employment and Training and gaining the Office of Youth Affairs from the Department of Families. As you rightly pointed out, a new department was formed, the Department of Industrial Relations, which also incorporates the Division of Workplace Health and Safety, public and private sector industrial relations, and the Electrical Safety Office from the former Department of Mines and Energy. I also have responsibility for both WorkCover and QLeave, which falls within our new portfolio, even though they are statutory bodies.

This move has enabled an increased focus on the government's industrial relations agenda to further the economic and social objectives of the state

government through the development of policies and the provision of services that contribute to productive, safe and fairer jobs. A departmental transition team was established in March of this year to ensure that transitional issues were addressed. The formation of the two departments was achieved, we believe, in a timely and effective manner. A primary focus throughout the whole transition process was on minimising disruption to service delivery to Queenslanders. Both of the departments are committed to maintaining a close working relationship to ensure costs are minimised, duplication is avoided and cooperation across the output and service areas of my department and the Department of Employment and Training.

⁰²⁸ Structures have been put in place to ensure that integrated service delivery, particularly within the regions, is maintained. We have done that by continuing to share the offices that we had in regional Queensland. Both the Department of Employment and Training and my department continue to share the same offices; we do not have separate offices. Arrangements have been put in place under which my department is responsible for the overall management, operation and administration of those offices. We hope to ensure that integrated regional services remain in place, avoiding any confusion amongst the community and clients. A regional service agreement between the Department of Employment and Training and the Department of IR has also been put in place to ensure that the community and client needs continue to be met and that performance standards are established. I am confident that all of those new arrangements with the creation of the Department of Industrial Relations will ensure that there is a greater focus on the delivery of fairer, safer and more productive workplaces, and that we are better equipped to deliver our election commitments over the next term.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: Page 20 of the MPS notes that an additional \$4.5 million has been made available to the Department of Industrial Relations to enhance workplace health and safety in Queensland. How will those funds be used to improve the safety and health of Queensland workers?

Mr NUTTALL: Obviously improving workplace health and safety is a key commitment of this government. I think it is important that Queensland families and communities expect that when workers go to work they can come home safe and sound. It is important that we do all we can as a government to ensure that that happens.

As you rightly pointed out, we have provided an additional \$4.5 million to try to enhance workplace health and safety services. We believe that that will strengthen workplace health and safety services. As I said earlier to Mr Lester, I am particularly pleased that we are going to honour an election commitment of employing an additional 12 inspectors who will have electrical qualifications and relevant industry experience. Those additional funds will be used to implement the findings of the review of the Electrical Safety Office and the Division of Workplace Health and Safety. They will be used to appoint specialist workplace health and safety investigators to work in regional Queensland. It will be used to implement industry task force findings in the building and construction industry and the sugar industry, and for workplace bullying. It will target serious hazards in high-risk industries and workplaces that have a poor record of workplace health and safety.

I am firmly of the view that if we work together as a community to identify and manage the risk to workplace health and safety, we will reduce the number and the severity of work-related injuries and diseases in this state. To achieve safe workplaces, strong emphasis will need to be placed on consultation with

employees, unions, employers and community groups to promote a more collective approach to the important area of workplace health and safety.

The Division of Workplace Health and Safety in my department will focus its activities on three strategic areas, that is, the development of effective health and safety laws and standards, informing and educating people in workplaces about how to identify and manage health and safety risks, and taking more enforcement action including prosecutions where necessary. Increased funding for workplace health and safety, we believe, is an important and practical application of this government's commitment to putting people and workplaces first. In addition to the \$4 million in additional funding for specific workplace health and safety initiatives, a further \$500,000 has been made available to implement an enhanced workers compensation package for Queenslanders.

Mr FENLON: In addition to prosecution and direct information enforcement action, I understand that the Department of Industrial Relations uses a range of information and education strategies to improve employers' and workers' knowledge about workplace health and safety issues. What information and education activities are available?

Mr NUTTALL: As I said to you, we are committed to improved workplace health and safety performance in general. To ensure that workplaces have access to accurate and useful information about workplace health and safety is part of that strategy. The Division of Workplace Health and Safety, we believe, uses a wide range of communication and education tools to inform the community and industry on those issues. Those tools include publications such as guides, brochures, newsletters, seminars and, of course, the Internet site. The division's web site provides free access to more than 800 documents ranging from safety alerts, brochures, guides, industry codes of practice and, of course, the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995.

Recent additions to the web site include a code of practice for the cash in transit industry, a code of practice for horse riding schools and a workers' guide to working in people's homes. This workers' guide is available in five languages, in case you might be interested.

Another successful education tool currently distributed to more than 400 businesses in Queensland and the rest in Australia is a workplace health and safety CD-ROM information service that is updated quarterly. This multimedia service covers the retail, manufacturing and service industries and hazardous substances.

A comprehensive range of health and safety videos is also available for sale or on loan. In 2000-01 a new video guide for risk management of manual tasks was produced and made available to Queensland workplaces. Seminars have also proven to be an effective and popular way of informing Queenslanders about workplace health and safety.

Last month, and I think you may have been with me on that trip to Toowoomba, we launched the workers' guide to working in people's homes.

Mr FENLON: And it was well received too.

Mr NUTTALL: Thank you for that. I think it was, too. The Division of Workplace Health and Safety also produces *Safety Zone*, a quarterly newsletter that provides a wide range of information about occupational health and safety news, new legislative changes, and innovative approaches to improving workplace health and safety for all Queenslanders.

In line with our government's commitment to the robust enforcement of health and safety laws, the Division of Workplace Health and Safety produces a prosecutions newsletter, with more than 16,000 copies distributed throughout Queensland, interstate and overseas. In the year ahead, the department will continue to use information and education as a means of improving workplace health and safety performances.

Mr FENLON: The MPS provides an allocation of \$350,000 per annum for the establishment of the central bargaining unit within DIR. What is the rationale for such a unit and how is it intended to work?

Mr NUTTALL: It is to break out piece in the public sector IR; that is the intent. The government has determined that it will enhance the role of the Department of IR in the development and implementation of future wages agreements for all government agencies. To do that, as you have rightly pointed out, we have established a central bargaining unit that will be responsible for the development and the implementation of the government's public sector wages policy and its strategy. It is a very small unit of negotiators and they will report directly to the general manager of the Division of Public Sector Industrial and Employee Relations, who will then report to the director-general and me as the Minister. This process represents the Queensland government's commitment to a much more hands-on approach to the resolution of wages agreements in the public sector and will ensure that the government is better informed of developments in negotiations should its assistance be required.

The central bargaining unit will comprise a core team of three senior officers and may be supplemented from time to time by secondments or temporary external appointments, depending on its workload. The central bargaining unit's functions will be focused on the implementation of our public sector wages policy. The unit will not replace the existing human resource and operational industrial relations practices of public sector agencies. Agencies will continue to deal with the normal day-to-day operational matters. The chief executive officers of government agencies will provide advice and strategic guidance to this unit about operational matters that have a direct effect on their agencies. Chief executive officers or their delegated nominees will also participate in the development of framework agreements to be endorsed by the government and in negotiations and settlement of agreements.

⁰²⁹ The Central Bargaining Unit will be responsible for the development and implementation of our wages policy, advice to me as the minister, ensuring that commitments to current agreements are finalised—that will be its first priority; we are hoping to have it up and running by the end of this month—the development of enterprise bargaining frameworks for public sector agencies, the negotiation of enterprise agreements on behalf of government agencies, and the overseeing and monitoring of the implementation of these agreements. The funding for the new positions will be provided by, as you said, an allocation of \$350,000 out of this budget.

The CHAIRMAN: Page 10 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements refers to new public sector workplace policies. Can you outline any recent initiatives by the Queensland government which support its commitment to employment security for the public sector work force?

Mr NUTTALL: One of the first things I did was write to all ministers regarding permanency of employment and reinforcing the government's commitment to that in the public sector and asking them to have a look at both the amount of casualisation and part-time people they were using and outsourcing to try to ensure that we have

greater permanency in our public sector. We are committed to enhancing healthy, effective workplaces that enable improvements in productivity through a more committed and motivated work force. The government believes that maximising employment certainty is an important factor in the delivery of service to all Queenslanders.

This approach is complemented within the work force itself by the use of instruments such as the Queensland Public Agency Staff Survey to increase the quality of working life by improving organisational climate and morale. The Queensland government believes in and supports a strong public sector, as I have indicated to you.

Employment security, we believe, underpins the government's commitment to a career public service and creating jobs in Queensland. It also reflects our desire as a government to promote best practice in the employment of its own work force. Specific commitments given by us as a government to demonstrate this support in the public sector include the fact that tenured public sector employees will not be forced into unemployment as a result of organisational change other than in exceptional circumstances, to minimise the circumstances where restructuring or contracting out would be considered, and where organisational changes require changes to employment arrangements there will be an active pursuit of retaining employees for other jobs and deployment opportunities.

We will consult on these issues. Agencies are required to talk to their employees and their representatives about the intentions to implement any change that may affect employment security for their work force. The government particularly values its work force. I indicated earlier to Mr Lester the number of changes we are making to improve working practices and to improve the conditions of employment. We believe that that is imperative if we are to retain people with skills.

The CHAIRMAN: In your introductory statement you stated that your department is working towards significant improvements in work and family initiatives. Can you outline any work and family initiatives that will benefit public service employees?

Mr NUTTALL: Yes, I can. Again, we believe that is a priority within my department. I think it is something that is particularly important and I am pleased that I have been asked the question. We have recently announced the introduction of this new work and family package for public sector employees. We think this builds on a number of initiatives that the public service employees already enjoy which help them to achieve, we hope, a better balance between work and other life commitments.

Under the new package, employees will have access to the following: six weeks paid adoption leave for employees who are the primary care giver at the time of adoption of a child or children; one week's paid leave for spouses who are public service employees at the time of birth or adoption of a child; prenatal leave of up to one ordinary week's leave for pregnant employees or a primary care giver who is adopting to attend medical interviews and/or appointments; and one day's leave for spouses of pregnant employees or of the primary care giver who are also public service employees. Public service employees are also able to take now, as you would know, their pro rata long service leave after seven years in employment for parental purposes.

We believe that this new work and family package builds on a range of other family friendly flexible hours arrangements. Employees already have access to

family leave, special leave and paid maternity leave to assist at important times in their lives with their families. They also have access to flexible working hour arrangements and options to work shorter working year cycles such as working 48 out of 52 working weeks in a year. There are also flexible working practices, for example, part-time employment or job sharing. They are available to agencies to support improvements to service delivery as far as practicable to meet the employment needs of staff. These employment arrangements will assist agencies in their goal of attracting and retaining, we believe, a highly skilled and motivated work force.

Major departments in the public sector unions and public sector employees have indicated widespread support for this work and family package. Employees have already contacted agencies seeking advice about the details of these initiatives. Again, it is fulfilling an election commitment that we made in the campaign.

The CHAIRMAN: There are some very positive initiatives there and I commend you and your department for moving ahead on those. You mentioned public sector initiatives. Could you talk about initiatives to better balance work and family responsibilities generally for all workers?

Mr NUTTALL: Can I just say that as a state government I think we recognise the concerns both men and women have in trying to balance work and a family life. It was therefore, we believed, important to try to implement these changes as quickly as possible. One of the major initiatives in this process is that we have established a Work and Family Unit in my department. That unit has four separate components covering promotion, doing research, liaison and consultancy activities. The focus of these activities is aimed at promoting the mutual benefits of creating a supportive work environment and actively encouraging and assisting Queensland employers to incorporate work and family issues into their work practices. The unit aims to assist employers and workers to make better use of flexible arrangements contained in their awards and agreements to accommodate their employees' family commitments.

We have as a government an ongoing commitment to work and family issues. In April of this year I announced the winners of the inaugural Queensland 2001 Work and Families Awards. Those awards recognise the achievements of some Queensland organisations that have introduced innovative work practices to address the work and family needs of their employees. There was widespread interest in these awards. Nominations were received from both the private and public sectors and the applicants represented a diverse range and size of industries.

Other programs aimed at raising awareness of the issue include the Men at Work round table held in June which examined the challenges men face in trying to balance their work and family commitments, and the recent major work and family conference called Juggling roles: all in a day's work, which I attended.

The government is also in the process of establishing a ministerial task force on work and family by December of this year. Its major role will be to assess our legislation and ways of assisting workers with family responsibilities. It will comprise representatives from employer, employee, community and government organisations.

In 1999 the state government created an Australian first when it legislated for unpaid maternity leave for casual workers who had worked on a regular and

systematic basis for the same employer for two years. Like the federal commission, which determined that the extension of this leave to casual workers should be after 12 months, we also concur with that and we intend to follow that through.

The CHAIRMAN: There are some great initiatives there. Thanks for outlining those. I wish you well in the further implementation. The time for government questions has expired.

Ms LEE LONG: With reference to page 25 of the MPS, employers in the building and construction industry pay \$2 for every \$1,000 of project costs over \$80,000. Of this, \$1.25 goes to the Queensland Division of Workplace Health and Safety as a notification fee. What does this \$1.25 really fund?

Mr NUTTALL: Could you just give us that again?

Ms LEE LONG: It is page 25.

Mr NUTTALL: I refer to Mr Seljak. Mr Seljak is in charge of the Division of Workplace Health and Safety. He should be able to answer that for you.

Mr SELJAK: That money is collected and goes into the consolidated revenue collected by Queensland Treasury. The money is allocated as part of the annual allocations to government departments to undertake government services. So it is not a direct fee that comes to the Division of Workplace Health and Safety to provide services.

Ms LEE LONG: So it just goes into consolidated funds? A further 50c goes into the industry training fund. What does this fund? That is 50c out of the \$2.

Mr NUTTALL: Could I ask the honourable member if we could take both those on notice and we will arrange to get you a detailed response as quickly as possible?

Ms LEE LONG: Only 25c of the \$2 goes to workers' long service leave. I wanted to know what happened to money unclaimed by workers who leave the industry before they are entitled to long service? Doesn't this money really belong to the employer?

Mr NUTTALL: We will have to take that on notice and I will get back to you.

Ms LEE LONG: On page 1 of the MPS you recognise that pressure and imperatives experienced by Queensland enterprises resulting from globalisation and the national competition policy are having a profound effect on the labour market. Why persevere with the national competition policy when it is shown to be so detrimental to our society?

Mr NUTTALL: The issue of national competition policy does not come within my portfolio. The only matter before my portfolio at the moment in relation to the national competition policy was the issue of WorkCover. There was a report released today from the workers compensation national competition policy review committee saying that they were largely happy with WorkCover in Queensland. So that is the only area that the national competition policy has addressed within my portfolio. I can give you some further detail on that if you want.

There were nine provisions of the WorkCover Queensland Act of 1996 which were identified as potentially restricting competition, and they have been reviewed by an interdepartmental committee comprised of representatives from the former Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations; Queensland Treasury; and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Review findings were based on the outcomes of a public benefit test conducted by an independent consultant, extensive stakeholder consultation and an awareness of the

government's seven priority outcomes. The review committee found that the majority of stakeholders are satisfied with the scheme's current operation, emphasising the importance of the stability that prevails under the current arrangements.

WorkCover currently delivers the lowest employer premiums of any state in this country. The scheme is fully solvent and Queensland workers enjoy some of the best benefits in the country. In spite of the outstanding performance of the existing scheme, some areas have been identified for change which are expected to improve further both the scheme's performance and the satisfaction of workers and employers.

The findings of the committee were that the requirements contained in the act that employers must maintain accident insurance for their workers be retained; that the public monopoly for Queensland workers compensation be retained; that WorkCover retain its exclusive claims management role but that the issue of private claims management would be reviewed in three years; that Q-COMP become a completely separate entity from WorkCover to ensure the independent regulation of the market—and that will be done in due course—that the current self-insurance licensing criteria be retained for a further three years at which time the full impact of self-insurance on the Queensland workers compensation market can be better assessed; that the self-insurance criteria will be reviewed in three years time; and that, while maintaining the requirement for self-insurers to maintain workplace health and safety standards, Q-COMP in conjunction with the Division of Workplace Health and Safety and DETIR examine alternative methods of achieving all those outcomes. I just say in closing: it will not be privatised.

Ms LEE LONG: On page 3 of the MPS you state that you support the development of employment policies that promote a better balance between work and family responsibilities. However, on page 1 you state that the growing use of labour hire firms and contractors and the growing casualisation of the work force is causing insecurity, longer working hours and stress among workers. How can your department accept these trends in the work force and reconcile them with the family friendly environment?

Mr NUTTALL: In the first place, the family friendly environment, as I have indicated in several answers to government members, was initially aimed at the public sector. Now we are setting up a work and family unit to work with both the private and the public sector. In terms of labour hire companies, I have met with their peak organisation. I have spoken to them in recent times about work practices in Queensland. They are happy to work in cooperation with the government. It is a problem. It is a problem when you have some labour hire companies who continue to try to find ways around the legislation in terms of not wanting to pay correct rates of pay and provide correct conditions of employment. Those people, in our view, are rogue elephants and their representative body—from my discussions with them—do not condone that at all. The best way to deal with those people is to continue to have our inspectors review their work practices and, where possible, they will be prosecuted.

Ms LEE LONG: On page 2 of the MPS you announce \$0.7 million to establish an online college to train Public Service employees. What will this training cover and for how long will the courses continue?

Mr NUTTALL: Part of this follows on from a commitment we gave in the last round of enterprise bargaining with the public sector. The government is committed to developing a highly skilled public sector work force by encouraging skills development through innovative training opportunities to all its employees. The

public sector online facility provides a unique opportunity for public sector workers to further develop their skills. Enhancement of online capability for the public sector training is a key policy commitment by this government. It will also support the state government department certified agreement, as I indicated to you, of last year. That makes available accredited and accessible training for certain groups of employees.

The initiative is to be developed over a three-year period and is a whole-of-Government approach to e-learning through the provision of appropriate technology and learning materials for employees. The online facility will provide a coordinated learning management environment to enhance the development of skills in the public sector. In this virtual learning and information system, agencies will be able to share access to resources for learning through a single Internet entrance point with additional links made available to relevant worldwide institutions of learning.

⁰³¹ We believe that it is good news for public sector employees located in the rural and remote areas of the state, who now have improved options for skills development. You raised another issue in relation to the Industry Training Advisory Board. We are the first jurisdiction to link training initiatives in the certified agreement with nationally recognised qualifications. The release of the Public Service's training package and training initiatives under the certified agreement has increased activity in the vocational education and training area in the public sector. The Industry Training Advisory Board will provide the required leadership and direction for Queensland agencies and staff to fully integrate the cultural change required by workplace learning and the implementation of the Public Service training package and other nationally recognised packages.

The ITAB will be the principal source of advice to the government. It will influence the strategic direction of vocational education and training and development for all public sector employees. It will contribute to the development of effective and efficient linkages across the state. It will provide a critical mechanism for assuring the quality of training and the delivery and assessment of this training. There are over 175,000 Public Service workers in Queensland, which represents 12.5 per cent of all Queensland wage and salary earners. There are some 245 different occupations. Current representations are dispersed across a number of industry training advisory bodies and training packages.

Ms LEE LONG: The departmental overview statement states that recent data on working hours suggests a large amount of extra time is being worked, much of it unpaid. Why is this? What is the department doing to remedy this situation?

Mr NUTTALL: Some of that is in the private sector, particularly in the finance industry. My understanding is that the ACTU, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, filed a reasonable hours test case in the federal Industrial Relations Commission on 14 May this year. Under that claim, the ACTU has sought to establish flexible guidelines to help curb excessive hours of work and unhealthy roster patterns. Factors such as employee safety, family responsibilities, workloads and the number of hours worked over an extended period have been identified as issues in determining reasonable hours of work. The ACTU is requesting an award clause that addresses reasonable hours and provides additional paid leave when certain hours are exceeded.

A preliminary hearing has occurred and the president of the commission has determined that the matter will proceed to a full bench as a test case. The Queensland Labor government is currently considering whether to intervene in that

case if it does proceed. The government has identified the significance of excessive working hours as an emerging labour market problem and has conducted seminars and research projects to examine this issue. Among the research findings was that 29 per cent of Queensland employees are working extended hours, that is, more than 44 hours a week, highlighting the pervasiveness of excessive working hours amongst all Queenslanders. In fact, it was shown in the report that Queensland exceeded the national average in terms of the proportion of work forces that work extended hours.

International trends also indicate that the issue of working hours has re-entered the public debate in most OECD countries. Many countries, including the United Kingdom, have recently expressed concern at working time arrangements, both in terms of excessive working hours and also inflexible working practices for families. France has legislated to have a 35-hour working week. If you would like me to do that, we will see how we go. I state clearly that it is not on the government agenda to do that. It is worth noting that preliminary surveys by the French government, however, indicated that 84 per cent of CEOs in France who signed a work hour reduction agreement under the first law were satisfied with the results. My department will continue to monitor the progress of the ACTU test case and any implications for the development of industry codes of practice for reasonable working time arrangements. We are also doing a number of other research projects into this issue.

Mr LESTER: Minister, I started to ask a question before, but perhaps the way I initially phrased it allowed you to pursue a little jest, which is not all that bad in such a meeting as this. I shall rephrase it.

Mr NUTTALL: I just tried to lighten it up, Mr Lester. I was not trying to avoid your question.

Mr LESTER: No, I know that. Would you consider writing to those families who live in houses built before 1992 urging them to install an electrical lifesaving device if they have not already done so?

Mr NUTTALL: That is something that we should take on board. That would entail 475,000 letters, which would not be cheap. However, the importance of electrical safety needs to be borne in mind. If we could identify where all those houses were, I think that that is something that we should consider as a department, and we will do that. When we have given that proper consideration to see if we can or cannot do that, I would be happy to write to you as the shadow minister to advise you of the outcomes of those deliberations.

Mr LESTER: It is purely a suggestion and a bipartisan thing.

Mr NUTTALL: Sure.

Mr LESTER: I refer to page 25 of the MPS, which states that the Division of Workplace Health and Safety collects regulatory fees totalling some \$22.8 million which are remitted to the consolidated revenue fund. How many workplaces in Queensland attract this particular tax?

Mr NUTTALL: I might ask Mr Seljak, who is in charge of the Division of Workplace Health and Safety, to answer.

Mr SELJAK: In terms of the workplace registration fees, there are approximately 50,000 workplaces that pay that fee.

Mr LESTER: Would you consider channelling this money directly back into the business community to ensure that workplaces are safe and productive

environments instead of it being remitted to the consolidated revenue fund? You are raising the money but it is going into consolidated revenue; you are not getting the benefit out of it in the department.

Mr NUTTALL: It does go into consolidated revenue on the one hand, but on the other hand the department is allocated \$86.2 million from consolidated revenue to do its business. In terms of workplaces paying this amount, that is part of that review of the Division of Workplace Health and Safety for future funding programs. I have to say that I believe that my department has been funded adequately from Treasury in terms of the capabilities of being able to do its work. In terms of the view that all that money should come back to us, we have been allocated funds from Treasury to do our job. We have been allocated over \$30 million from Treasury for workplace health and safety. We are only getting \$22 million in levies, but Treasury is giving us over \$30 million.

Mr LESTER: Can I suggest that you keep lobbying to get effectively as much as you can.

Mr NUTTALL: It is giving us more than is collected.

Mr LESTER: I refer to the inquiry into pay equity mentioned at page 14 of the MPS, and in particular recommendations 6 and 10, which provide that the commission must refuse to certify agreements unless it is satisfied that the agreements provide equal remuneration for men and women employees doing work of equal or comparable value. Do you believe this recommendation takes the discretion away from the QIRC? Do you believe that the placing of such a burden of proof on the parties is reasonable?

⁰³² **Mr NUTTALL:** You are right in identifying the fact that it is only a report and it is at this stage only a recommendation to the government. The inquiry you referred to was established as a result of recommendations of a task force set up in 1998. It recommended that there should be some changes and a review of the findings of the New South Wales pay equity inquiry in order to secure pay equity for Queensland women workers. Under the current Industrial Relations Act 1999, the government adopted the task force recommendations concerning pay equity, which included equal remuneration as a principal objective of the act, amending the definition of 'equal remuneration' to include equal pay for work of equal or comparable value and including 'pay equity' in the definition of an industrial matter.

The industrial relations task force considered as part of its deliberations the fact that equal pay for work of equal value was first granted at the national level as a result of the equal pay case of 1969 and 1972. I recall that because I was working in a bank at the time and a number of female workers with whom I worked were granted equal pay. A lot of it was backdated and they all went out and bought new cars.

However, despite numerous equal pay cases being run in both the state and federal jurisdictions since that time, pay equity has not been achieved. In fact, 32 years on, Australian women in the work force are still earning less than men. A range of studies of wages in Australia has identified that a gap in earnings persists when the effect of factors such as part-time work, overtime, junior rates of pay, education and experience, gender and parental status, job characteristics and occupation and industry are removed.

In September of last year the former minister, Paul Braddy, issued a direction to the state commission to conduct an inquiry into pay equity. The terms of reference were to look at the extent of pay inequity in Queensland, the adequacy of current

legislative arrangements and a draft pay equity principle for consideration by the full bench. The findings of the inquiry vindicate its establishment. The inquiry found that women in Queensland are still earning between 11 per cent and 17 per cent less than men. The inquiry noted that occupational segregation, the poor bargaining position of women and enterprise bargaining are part of the reasons for the persistence of this large gap.

Mr LESTER: I refer to page 14 of the MPS, which states that the Industrial Court of Queensland, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and the industrial registry provide an independent conciliation, arbitration and agreement approval service. With reference to your intervention in the administration of the QIRC as almost your first act as minister so that the administrative role, a position with great power, was removed from the commission's president and is now appointed to for five-year terms from among commissioners, opening up the process to the accusation of political interference, do you believe this action affected the independence of the commission and will you commit to the appointment of the commission administrator for life instead of the next term?

Mr NUTTALL: You indicated that that was one of the first acts I passed as the minister. Also included in that act was improved long service leave. I think we should point that out. That was part of that legislation at the time.

The Industrial Relations Act 1999 actually restructured the Queensland Industrial Commission and the Queensland Industrial Court. For the first time, there was a full-time president and a vice-president. Those positions were created along with the new position of the commission administrator. All commission members, including the president, vice-president, administrator and commissioners, were also appointed with tenures replacing the previous seven-year appointment. They were appointed to life tenures. In addition, the commission administrator appointment is for a period of five years. The government has no plans at this stage, in answer to your question, to make the commission administrator a lifetime appointment.

The commission administrator continues to be and exercises the powers of a commissioner and also has tenure as a commissioner. The commission administrator, Mr Bloomfield, was appointed as an industrial commissioner in 1992 and was formerly the executive director of the Metal Trades Industry Association, which is now known as the Australian Industry Group.

When the government created this position in 1999, its intention was to ensure that the commission administrator was responsible for the day-to-day administration of the commission and registry, as well as the orderly and expeditious exercise of the commission's jurisdiction and powers. The amendments to the act in relation to the administrator as from 3 June were made to reinforce this intention and ensured that administrative authority for the commission lies solely with the administrator.

The commission administrator is now responsible for the allocation of cases to commissioners, for determining the composition of a full bench of the commission and for approving requests for referral of a hearing from a single commissioner to a full bench. The administrator's role is also concerned with improving the efficiency of the industrial commission. I understand that in this regard the commission administrator has begun a process of developing performance targets for the commission. This process will include identifying time lines in other comparable jurisdictions, with the intended objective being to ensure that the commission meets best practice.

The amendments to the role of the commission administrator do not impact on the independence of the commission. They are not related to individual decision making of the commissioners; rather, they relate solely to ensuring that the commission as a body operates in the most effective and efficient manner for its clients, employers, unions, employees and other industrial stakeholders in the community.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for non-government questions has expired. I call the member for Woodridge.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: I note that page 9 of the MPS refers to the establishment of a youth advocacy service. Can you explain what the government aims to achieve with this service?

Mr NUTTALL: Certainly. One of the important components of *Putting people and workplaces first* was young people at work. That was aimed to give young people assistance, information and advice about their rights and obligations at the workplace. The service will provide a complete employment rights service to youth. At present, officers of my department offer compliance and advisory services associated with awards and agreements. This new service will, in addition to existing services, focus on the broader employment rights issues that young people are facing, including discrimination and bullying. Services will be available throughout the whole of the state and will include representation before relevant tribunals, advice and education and referrals to other services.

The service will be funded by a reallocation of the Department of Industrial Relations' resources over a three-year period. Officers of my department have completed a program of consultation with agencies already offering services to young people. The organisations we consulted were the Youth Advocacy Centre, the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission, the Queensland Working Women's Service, the Department of Employment and Training, the Division of Training in the Office of Youth Affairs, the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland, youth and family services at Logan City, Legal Aid Queensland and the Queensland Council of Unions. The consultation process has established an identifiable need for a service targeting young people specialising in advocacy and information on rights and obligations at work, such as those issues I have already outlined.

⁰³³ We will put this out to tender. It is envisaged that the successful tenderer will be the one best able to demonstrate its ability to perform activities such as providing representation in tribunals and courts; the promotion of youth services; the establishment and operation of advisory services by either the phone or the Internet; development and delivery of educational workshops and seminars; development and operation of a one-stop shop that has the ability and knowledge to refer matters to other agencies; the establishment and maintenance of a network with other agencies; and the knowledge of legislation and principles relative to wages and conditions of employment, unfair dismissals, workplace discrimination and sexual harassment, especially as they impact on young people. We are hoping to get this up and running as soon as we possibly can.

Mr RODGERS: Minister, can you outline the government's proposals regarding common law access and statutory benefits?

Mr NUTTALL: I think that is a really important question in relation to workers compensation, because over a period we have had a situation where the former government reined in some of those matters that you have raised. And since coming

to office in 1998, as a Labor government we think we have made significant progress to restore fairness and equity to the workers compensation scheme while maintaining some financial responsibility as a government.

As a government, we have improved access to the scheme, enhanced by widening the coverage for injured workers. We have a fairer definition of what an injured worker is. We have allowed compensation to the extent of aggravation if a pre-existing injury is aggravated in the course of employment. We have endeavoured to cut down the decision times for claims while increasing the time allowed for appeals. We have tried to work on improvements to the review process and medical assessment tribunals to provide greater transparency. I think WorkCover has done a particularly good job with that.

The premium formula has been reviewed in cooperation with employers. We have abolished the 10 per cent surcharge on employers' premiums. WorkCover has delivered the lowest average premium rate of any state, and WorkCover Queensland has restored to full funding three years ahead of expectations. It is now the best-performing workers compensation scheme in the country.

We were re-elected with a commitment to maintain and enhance common law rights of injured workers while ensuring that any changes are made within a climate of financial responsibility. We first made that commitment in 1999. We gave a commitment as a government to a review of the coalition's unfair restrictions to common law within the first six months of the second term. At that time actuarial advice was that it would be artificial to attempt to quantify the effect of the coalition restrictions as no cases had been before the courts. It is not difficult for any fair-minded person to concede that the coalition's restrictions to common law simply went too far. The mandatory defined contributory negligence and mitigating loss provisions, the exclusion of specific damages such as the loss of consortium, and an overly prescriptive pre-proceeding process have all been to the detriment of the rights of injured workers. We intend to address those and fix those.

I want to pay a particular compliment to both the chairman of the WorkCover board, Mr Brusasco, and the CEO, Tony Hawkins, for the excellent job that I think they have done with WorkCover over their period of tenure.

Mr RODGERS: Minister, I have a question along similar lines. Will the changes to workers compensation help restore the rights of workers to fair compensation payments? And will workers still have a right of appeal against decisions regarding disputed claims?

Mr NUTTALL: That is fair comment—a fair ask. As I said to you, we are now the best-performing workers compensation scheme in the country. What we want to do is continue to improve this scheme in a financially responsible way. We have already announced further improvements that are to be made to the benefits for injured workers while maintaining affordable premiums for employers. Some of those improvements include: improving the process for workers' access to seek common law damages, as I have said; introducing a responsible and integrated package to give seriously injured workers and their dependants greater compensation without increasing employer premiums; implementing fairer and more accessible workers compensation arrangements for all workers in the building and the construction industry; and helping more injured workers back to work by developing an industry-based rehabilitation model to assist in retraining and rehabilitating those workers unable to return to their previous work or occupation. The new reform package represents a modest package of improvements in benefits. They have been fully costed by WorkCover's actuary. The scheme will

accommodate any increased costs without the need to raise employers' premium rates and without threatening its fully funded and solvent position.

With regard to that question of appeal rights—in 1999 the government overhauled the pre-existing review process by formally establishing a review unit separate to WorkCover's insurance functions to ensure greater impartiality in decision making. We established a WorkCover Review Council consisting of worker and employer representatives to oversee the review and appeal and Medical Assessment Tribunal process; ensuring that the process for appointing doctors to the Medical Assessment Tribunal—and I think this is really important—was made more open and transparent, using a selection process based on merit; reducing the time for WorkCover or a self-insurer to decide a claim from six to three months; and increasing the time for lodgment of an application for a review from 28 days to three months. This is a really good news story for Queensland and WorkCover. Given what has happened in other states, we have much to be proud of, in my view. And as I say, a lot of that credit has to go to the management team at WorkCover itself.

Mr FENLON: Minister, I know you have already mentioned tonight the WorkCover fund, which has recently come out of a period of deficit. Is there anything else that you wish to inform the committee of in relation to that fund?

Mr NUTTALL: Yes, there is. When you have some good news you like to spread it. As at 30 June last year—the year 2000—Queensland reached full funding and statutory solvency. As the required audits and accounts for the last financial year are still being prepared, I cannot speculate on the 2000-01 figures, of course, and they will be detailed in the annual report, which I understand should be ready for tabling in parliament by about November.

As you rightly said, WorkCover Queensland is the statutory body and a candidate government-owned corporation. It is self-funded through premium revenue and investment returns. The total revenue for the 1999-2000 financial year was \$807 million, consisting of \$532 million in premium revenue and \$275 million in investment returns. It paid \$416 million in net claims for the same period. The surplus after administration costs, tax equivalents and reserves for future liabilities resulted in full funding at the 20 per cent statutory solvency. WorkCover provided insurance and claims services to 134,000 policyholders and more than 69,000 injured workers as at 30 June last year. There were 69,620 statutory claims lodged with WorkCover in the 1999-2000 year, excluding the self-insurers, at a cost of \$185.8 million.

⁰³⁴ There were 1,612 common law claims lodged. The average settlement amount for a common law claim was \$79,999. There are currently 23 licensed self-insurers in our state. Self-insurers accounted for 12,715 statutory claims in the same period and total claim payments amounted to \$38.8 million. Self-insured employers represent approximately 17 per cent of statutory claims in the scheme and cover approximately 116,000 workers, which represent about 8.8 per cent of the total work force in the state.

As I said to you earlier, a significant proportion of WorkCover's income is from investment returns, not just employer premiums. In the past financial year—that is 1999-2000—WorkCover experienced positive investment returns. WorkCover's board, as I have said to you, is a professional business board with excellent company director and investment credentials. Last year the government legislated to ensure that funds sitting in WorkCover's investment fluctuation reserves would not be used when calculating solvency.

Mr FENLON: You have already mentioned the WorkCover issue in relation to the national competitive policy review. Is there anything further that you can provide the committee with in terms of those recommendations coming from the review and how the government would intend to respond to those recommendations?

Mr NUTTALL: As I said in my opening statement, the outcome of the national competitive policy review is now publicly available and I tabled an article from the *Australian Financial Review* today. I think that it is particularly pleasing to be able to sit here before the committee today to announce that the review has confirmed that WorkCover Queensland is to remain 100 per cent publicly owned and operated in order to protect the interests of Queensland employers, workers and the community.

We have a long and proud history of workers compensation in this state. Those of us with some knowledge of Labor history would know that 85 years ago the T. J. Ryan Labor government actually introduced the first state owned workers compensation system in order to protect Queensland businesses and Queensland workers from the profit motives of the private insurance market. The scheme has been amended from time to time. WorkCover Queensland remains a credit to the principles espoused at the time of T. J. Ryan.

The national competition policy review has firmly established that a publicly run workers compensation scheme provides the best mechanism to balance the rights of injured workers against employers' needs for competitive and affordable premiums within a secure and stable environment. In rejecting the introduction of competitive underwriting and private claims management by private insurers, the review indicated that this would likely lead to increased premium volatility driven by the introduction of profit motive and attempts to capture market share. Other factors that were considered included the impact on regional employment, the additional regulatory costs of a split system and interstate experiences.

I am particularly pleased that the review has acknowledged that one of the strengths of WorkCover Queensland is its ability to deliver an equitable and integrated service delivery model to regional and remote areas of this state. Can I assure everyone here today that this will continue to be our priority. Other key recommendations of the NCP review included the separation of Q-Comp, which is the WorkCover's regulatory arm, from WorkCover's commercial operations to ensure independent regulation of the market and to give additional transparency and improve all stakeholders' confidence in the system. The review also recommended that the current licensing criteria for self-insurers be retained for a further three-year period.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, page 10 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements refers to a long service leave directive. How will Queensland workers benefit from the recent legislative changes to long service leave entitlements?

Mr NUTTALL: I thank you for that. Can I just indulge the committee for one moment and, in finishing off that last answer, make it very clear that HIH and its collapse had no impact whatsoever on WorkCover. I just think that it is important that that goes on the record.

In response to your question, those recent changes to the long service leave entitlements under the IR Act meant that Queensland workers will be able to take their long service leave five years earlier. The Industrial Relations and Other Acts Amendment Act 2001, which commenced on 3 June this year, provides a new entitlement of eight and two-thirds weeks leave after 10 years service, which replaces the old 13 weeks after 15 years. That is the first lot of improvements to long

service leave in 35 years. The previous entitlement was established back in 1964 and obviously has not kept pace with any changes in the labour market or community standards. The old standard of 13 weeks after 15 years was probably the least favourable in Australia, and changing trends in the labour market made it difficult for workers to accrue 15 years service with one employer simply because most employees these days do not last 15 years with the one employer.

The new qualifying period of 10 years service brings Queensland into line with the standards in the majority of other states and provides an appropriate response to the changes that have occurred in the labour market since 1964. Work patterns have changed over that time and, as I said, 10 years is now regarded as a long time. Many people in the work force, as I have said earlier to the committee, are working longer and harder hours. This new standard, we believe, gives long-serving workers the chance to refresh themselves during their working lives and to achieve a better balance between work, family commitments and their life outside of work. We believe that will result in a happier and healthier work force.

The legislative changes are based on the outcome of a review of long service leave by the Industrial Relations Commission. The review was conducted under section 58(2) of the 1999 act and required a full bench to review the entitlements. That review was completed on 27 June last year and the government decided to legislate to give effect to the outcomes of that review. So that is how it came about. The demands of balancing work and family life in a modern world are one of the key policy changes confronting us over the coming years and this is, we believe, a great government initiative.

Mr RODGERS: With recent changes in industrial relations, will the minister and his department—this is a two-part question for you—work towards the elimination of enterprise agreements in the near future? I believe enterprise agreements are not what they are made out to be, particularly in the sugar industry. That is the first part of it. Do you want me to do both parts now?

Mr NUTTALL: Yes, you may as well.

Mr RODGERS: The second part is: if that does occur and enterprise agreements are taken away, would you ensure that conditions going through previous enterprise agreements cannot be taken off workers, especially sugar industry workers?

Mr NUTTALL: Because your seat encompasses a large sugar area, doesn't it?

Mr RODGERS: That is right.

Mr NUTTALL: I suppose we should start off by saying that IR is all about employers and unions and employees working together to determine what is best for their work force. Over a period of time we go through all of these various different things. At the moment the flavour of the month is enterprise bargaining. There is a range of choices in agreement making that are needed to suit different circumstances. I do not think that one glove fits all, and that includes single employers, multi-employers, projects and new business agreements. The thing that underlines everything in this state is the strong award system that we have. That provides fair and reasonable wages and conditions that ensure that workers who, through no fault of their own, are unable to receive the benefits of bargaining are not left behind. Also we have, of course, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission as the independent umpire. That is there, of course, to assist all parties to reach agreement if negotiations do break down.

⁰³⁵ Collective agreement making and enterprise bargaining clearly will remain a key focus of the IR system in Queensland. We recognise that bargaining and agreement making has suited the needs of many parties, both employers, unions and employees, and does provide positive outcomes. Of course, like anything, enterprise bargaining over the past decade has had its advantages and disadvantages. It has worked well in some areas and less so in others.

There was a comprehensive review by the tripartite industrial relations task force that was initiated by the Labor government when we came into office in 1998 to look at the experience of more deregulated environments based on enterprise bargaining. We wanted to hear the views of all parties involved. That tripartite task force was chaired by Professor Margaret Gardener, who was the Pro Vice-Chancellor at Griffith University, and it included representatives of employers, unions and governments—three from the employers, three from the unions and one from the government—and two independents, including the chairperson.

The Queensland Government responded to the report of that task force. The legislation has provided, we believe, greater choice in bargaining arrangements in order to cater for the diversity of circumstances across all labour markets. The act retained the provision for single enterprise agreements, but it also provided equally the agreements that covered new businesses. In this respect, the government has ensured that the Queensland commission has the necessary powers to assist all parties to reach agreement, as I have said.

With the recent CSR sugar dispute, the one that you referred to, the Queensland Industrial Commission was able to quickly bring those parties together for conciliation to try to reach an agreement. I have run out of time.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for government questions has expired. I call the member for Keppel.

Mr LESTER: I refer to page 9 of the MPS, which refers to the establishment of a Work and Family Unit. Do you support the ACTU test case presently before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, which would provide additional paid leave to workers who work additional hours even when they were paid overtime for time worked? How many hours work do you believe to be a reasonable level?

Mr NUTTALL: How many do I believe? All the studies have indicated that the average working week now is somewhere between 45 and 50 hours. As I have said to you, what we are trying to do is to find a balance.

In terms of the ACTU reasonable hours test case, I have given a detailed answer earlier. In terms of the ACTU test case, the government is considering our position at the moment as to whether we will intervene in that. It is early days in terms of that test case. As you would be aware, the ACTU is requesting an award clause that addresses reasonable hours and provides additional paid leave when certain hours are exceeded. As a government, we have identified the significance of excessive working hours as an emerging labour market problem. I went through a range of statistics in terms of that.

As a department, we have contracted two research projects. One of those projects examines the impact of extended hours on safety at work. That has been carried out by the Centre for Sleep Research at the University of South Australia. The other project involves assessing the impact of extended hours on family life. That is being undertaken by the Centre for Labour Research at the University of Adelaide. This research will greatly assist me as the minister in my capacity to successfully fulfil our election commitment of developing an industry code of

practice to achieve reasonable working hour arrangements. The outcome of this will be arrangements that are appropriate for workplaces and which will also ensure safe and healthy workplaces.

As I said before, Mr Lester, France has legislated for a 35-hour working week. Are you suggesting that we might do something like that?

Mr LESTER: It is interesting. Do you have an estimate of what the cost to the Queensland government would be if such a policy were enforced in the Queensland Public Service?

Mr NUTTALL: No, I do not. I do not know how you could draw an estimate of that. I would like to think that public sector employees are not worked to death and do work reasonable hours. Public sector employees do get access to overtime payments anyway, which is all there in the budget.

Mr LESTER: Have you consulted with the private sector on the effects such a condition would have on their business? How much will this cost the private sector?

Mr NUTTALL: Can I just say that any changes to any industrial relations laws in this state would only be done after full consultation with employers and unions. I would not for one moment endeavour to put through any laws of such a significant change, if there were to be any, without consulting with the employers first.

Mr LESTER: That is nice to know. We can expect no little bit slipped into the legislation.

Mr NUTTALL: No, you are right. The ACTU test case will take some time. We will have to see what they bring in. They are not saying work fewer hours. The ACTU is asking the federal commission to have what they call a reasonable hours clause in awards. The reasonable hours clause might say that, if anyone works more than 44 or 48 hours a week, they should have a significant break from work. With those sorts of changes to legislation, as I said to you, I would ensure that I would discuss that with employers first. The employers, of course, at the moment are putting their case before the federal Industrial Relations Commission as well.

Mr LESTER: Will enterprise bargaining in the Public Service continue beyond the next round of enterprise bargaining? Will you commit to giving the continuation of the enterprise bargaining process in the Public Service your full support?

Mr NUTTALL: Yes, I will. The next round of enterprise bargaining—I think the first lot of agreements fall due towards the end of this year. Main Roads is first and Health is second. To facilitate the enterprise bargaining process in the public sector, we have established, as I said earlier to the committee, a central bargaining unit within my department to help facilitate the next round of enterprise bargaining. It does have the full support of the government. It is my aim to work as constructively as possible with the unions to try to reach outcomes with all of the unions that represent members in the public sector.

Mr LESTER: I refer to page 10 of the MPS, where it is indicated that a review of Public Service housing rental policy will be undertaken, and I ask: who will be undertaking this review and have the review terms of reference been established yet? Will these review parameters include the enabling of some uniformity to be established in the standard of accommodation provided to public servants in rural centres and security concerns in Public Service rental properties?

Mr NUTTALL: I might ask the Acting Director-General of the department, Mr McGowan, to answer that.

Mr McGOWAN: The commitment is to commence a review of rentals in public sector rentals. Housing rentals are an important part of the attraction and retention of people in country areas. Currently, rents are at significantly subsidised rates and the intention would be to maintain that.

The issue about housing rentals and the adjustment to rentals is one that needs to be looked at in the same way as adjustments to other allowances occur. We have in fact increased a range of other allowances, like travelling allowances, as a consequence of this.

⁰³⁶ The issue about housing rentals is that there has been no increase in the rentals charged to public servants since about 1995, I think, although that date might be incorrect. The process is simply to start a process involving the unions to look at what might be a fair and reasonable mechanism by which rentals are applied and adjusted, remembering the critical importance of housing for teachers, police and other public servants in rural areas and the need to maintain the incentive for those people. The review has not commenced. It is one of the issues arising out of the enterprise agreement that we need to have a look at in terms of the future. So there are no conclusions about the consequences of that review. But it will be conducted with the involvement of public sector unions whose members are affected by government housing in country areas.

Mr LESTER: I note from page 17 of the MPS that the output revenue for the Industrial Court and Commission has increased by \$648,000 from a budget of \$4,867,000 to an estimated actual of \$5,515,000. Notes 1 and 2 relating to output revenues explains the increase on supplementation funding to meet the cost of an additional Industrial Commissioner. As funding for employees' expenses increased by only \$347,000, what was the rest of this increase expended on?

Mr McGOWAN: The issue of the funding of the extra Industrial Commission commissioner not only includes the cost of the commissioner but also the commissioner's associate. So there is an additional staff member who is involved in that. The commitment given in terms of the future is that that position will be fully funded, and money has been made available to that, as you will see in the MPS, so that the full costs of the extra industrial relations commissioner will be met fully in the next financial year.

Mr LESTER: I note from the first item of the Capital Acquisition Statement on page 27 of the MPS that the operational asset replacement is estimated to more than double in the coming year. Is this because the estimated actual is only for the period from March to June and, if so, could you give an indication of the value of this for the full year? If this is the full-year figure, why has there been such an increase?

Mr McGOWAN: Again, firstly, the issue about the \$409,000 is for the period since the separation of the two departments. The balance of the cost in terms of capital acquisition would have been included in the Department of Employment and Training Capital Acquisition Statement and the figure for the next year of \$939,000 is the estimated cost for this department in its full year of operation. So you need to look at both the statement here, but the pre March figures are in fact in the MPS of the Department of Employment and Training.

The CHAIRMAN: There being no further questions, that concludes the examination of the estimates—

Mr NUTTALL: Madam Chair?

The CHAIRMAN: Would you like to add something?

Mr NUTTALL: Yes, thank you. The honourable member for Tablelands asked us some questions and we said we would take them on notice. My department has managed to get us some information on that. If you are happy with that, we would be in a position where we could answer that now, if that is okay.

Mr McGOWAN: I think the question was: what is the 0.05 per cent training levy used for? The answer to that question is that it is primarily used to fund additional apprentices and trainees in the building and construction industry through the Building and Construction Training Fund. Since the introduction of the training fund in January 1999 it has contributed to the employment of over 1,650 additional apprentices and trainees.

QLeave simply acts as the collection agency for that fund, which is then remitted to the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund. That is in relation to the first part.

I think the second part of the question was with respect to long service leave: why is the unclaimed money for employees who do not qualify for long service leave not returned to the employers that have paid the levy? Firstly, let me say that the long service leave levy is something that is supported by the industry and the employees. It is collected by the industry to meet the costs of long service leave for workers who do spend long enough in the industry to qualify for long service leave. As a matter of principle, that is no different to the way in which the rest of employers allocate resources for long service leave and then the payments for those are made subsequently.

It is pointed out that it is not the employer that pays the levy, it is the company who has the contract who pays the levy for those works, and that is only for constructions where the cost of the project is in excess of \$80,000. The money is for the payment of long service leave and, without the current scheme and if funds were paid to all those regardless of eligibility by qualifying for long service leave, that would increase the costs of that to the building and construction industry. So unlike other employees there is in fact a subsidisation of those people who employ, thereby reducing the levy costs to the people on a regular basis.

Ms LEE LONG: What about small builders who are not companies or anything like that. That is just another tax to them?

Mr McGOWAN: They only pay the levy for their employees when the project is in excess of that \$80,000.

Ms LEE LONG: If you are building a house it usually comes in at over \$80,000.

Mr NUTTALL: You are right, but this levy has been in place now for some time. I think the important thing to point out is that it was done in agreement with the industry. It was not something forced on them by government. It was a matter that was negotiated between the industry and the unions and they agreed with that. QLeave is the collecting agent. That is the government's role in it. It is really important to realise that the peak industry bodies reached agreement with the unions in terms of this levy.

Mr McGOWAN: It is the person who is purchasing the construction who pays, not the employer. So it is the person who purchases the house, for example, who pays the levy. It is Woolworths, if it is Woolworths that is building a construction of that magnitude. So it is the purchaser of the building project, not the employer of the labourer who worked on it.

Ms LEE LONG: So the employer or whoever it is has to take that into account when he puts in a price for that job?

Mr McGOWAN: That is right.

Ms LEE LONG: You did not answer the first question about the \$1.25. What does that \$1.25 fund?

Mr NUTTALL: Could you just ask that question again?

Ms LEE LONG: The first question was: of the \$2 for every thousand dollars of project costs over \$80,000, \$1.25 goes to the Queensland Division of Workplace Health and Safety as a notification fee. We wanted to know what that \$1.25 really funded?

Mr SELJAK: As I indicated earlier, the money is actually not allocated to Workplace Health and Safety, it is collected and goes into consolidated revenue. However, as the minister pointed out, consolidated revenue—that is, Treasury—does allocate considerable funds for workplace health and safety services in excess of the amount collected from workplace registrations and building notification fees. We use a significant portion of those funds to administer workplace health and safety in the construction industry. That includes our inspectorate, a third of whom have expertise in the building and construction industry—so they are construction safety inspectors—the information programs and seminars we run for the construction industry, and the safety standards and regulations that we develop that are specific to the construction industry. So there is a whole collection of services to the building and construction industry that that money that is appropriated by Treasury from consolidated revenue is used for.

⁰³⁷ **Ms LEE LONG:** That is all very good, but my sources of information say that they are lucky to see an inspector in five years or more. It is just a waste to them.

Mr NUTTALL: I would not have thought that there would be too many major building sites that would not get inspected. In terms of inspectors, we have 20 regional offices throughout Queensland, with officers allocated in all those regions. From time to time we have what we call a blitz by the various industries or various areas, and we have people go in there and do those. If there are areas where you believe the department has not been conducting inspections, I am more than happy for you to write to me and we will address that issue.

Ms LEE LONG: What sort of remuneration would these inspectors be getting?

The CHAIRMAN: Can I just clarify this with the member? We are going into new questions, not questions that were put on notice. I will just check with the minister whether he is prepared to continue.

Mr NUTTALL: I am happy to answer that.

Ms LEE LONG: That was my last question, anyway.

Mr NUTTALL: They are between AO4 and AO6 level. In terms of money, in round figures it is somewhere between \$45,000 to \$60,000 depending on their classification.

Ms LEE LONG: Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN: Can I just check with the member for Tablelands: does that satisfy those issues that were originally taken on notice? Is there no need now for anything further on notice?

Ms LEE LONG: That satisfies my questions. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: There being no further questions, that concludes the examination of the estimates of expenditure for the Department of Industrial Relations. I commend the minister on his first estimates as minister. He has

performed fairly well, hasn't he? Our commendations also go to your departmental officers for their attendance and involvement in this process. I also thank my colleagues, the members of parliament who have been involved in Estimates Committee F for their cooperation and deliberation.

I also thank Hansard, who always do a tremendous job. I thank our support staff generally: Sarah Lim and our research staff. Their work is not done yet. They have to write up a report and decipher all of this good information. I also thank the catering staff and the parliamentary attendants. All of the staff here have made a valuable contribution to this very important process of public accountability. Thank you.

That concludes the committee's consideration of the matters referred to it by the parliament on 30 May. I declare this public hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 6.02 p.m.