

TUESDAY, 20 JULY 2004

Estimates Committee D Members

Mr R.L. Poole (Chair)
Ms V.L. Barry
Mr G.E. Malone
Mr J.D. O'Brien
Miss F.S. Simpson
Mrs C.A. Smith
Mr P.W. Wellington

In Attendance

Hon. P.T. Lucas, Minister for Transport and Main Roads

Queensland Rail

Mr B. Scheuber, Chief Executive Officer
Mr S. Cantwell, Group General Manager (Network Access)

Queensland Transport

Mr B. Wilson, Director-General
Mr A. Tesch, Deputy Director-General
Ms H. Stehbens, Executive Director (Rail Ports & Freight)
Capt. J. Watkinson, General Manager (Maritime Safety Queensland)
Mr T. Kursius, Executive Director (Land Transport & Safety)
Mr M. McShea, General Manager (Translink)
Ms C. Brunjes, Director (Finance)

Department of Main Roads

Mr S. Golding, Director-General
Ms D. Anderson, General Manager (Corporate Services)
Ms K. Peut, Executive Director, Roads Programs
Mr B. Drew, Executive Director, South-East Queensland

The committee commenced at 8.31 a.m.

The CHAIR: I declare this meeting of Estimates Committee D now open. On behalf of the committee, welcome ladies and gentlemen to today's hearing. I am Robert Poole, the member for Gaven and chair of this committee. My fellow committee members are Mr Ted Malone, MP, the member for Mirani and deputy chair; Mrs Bonny Barry, MP, the member for Aspley; Mr Jason O'Brien, MP, the member for Cook; Miss Fiona Simpson, MP, the member from Maroochydore; Mrs Christine Smith, MP, the member for Burleigh; and Mr Peter Wellington, MP, the member for Nicklin.

The committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2004 for the areas set out in the sessional orders dated 20 May 2004. We will examine the portfolios of Transport and Main Roads, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy as well as Local Government and Planning and Women—in that order. The committee has given leave for non-committee members to ask the minister questions. In this regard, Dr Bruce Flegg, MP, the member for Moggill, will be participating in the hearing this morning. On a similar basis, Mr Vaughan Johnson, MP, the member for Gregory, will be participating in the hearing this afternoon.

I remind the committee and the ministers that the time limit for questions is one minute and three minutes for the answers. The bell will ring once 15 seconds before the end of these time limits and twice when the time has expired. I will allow more time for answers if the questioner consents. The sessional orders require that at least half the time for questions at today's hearing is allotted to non-government members. Government members and non-government members of the committee will take turns at asking questions in blocks lasting approximately 20 minutes, commencing with the non-government members.

In relation to media coverage of today's hearing, the committee has resolved that video coverage without sound and still photographs is allowed only during the opening statements and at the commencement of proceedings after each change of departments. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask advisers to the minister to identify yourselves before speaking. Please also ensure that mobile phones or pagers are switched off while in the chamber so as not to disrupt the proceedings.

I remind all of those participating in the hearing today that these proceedings are similar to parliament to the extent that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. Standing order 195 provides that strangers to the parliament may be admitted or excluded from the hearing at the pleasure of the committee.

The first item for consideration is the estimates of expenditure for the Transport and Main Roads portfolio. The time allotted is four hours and 30 minutes. The first area to be examined is the Department of Transport from 8.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. followed by the Department of Main Roads from 11.45 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. There will be two 15-minute breaks. The first will start at 10 a.m. and the second at 11.30 a.m. At the conclusion of this portfolio the committee will break for a one-hour lunch recess.

I call on the estimates of the proposed expenditure referred to the committee and declare the proposed expenditure for the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, you have five minutes to make an opening statement if you wish.

Mr LUCAS: Good morning, Mr Chair, I thank you and your fellow committee members for the opportunity to be present today. With 1,000-plus people moving each week to Queensland, our rapid growth is placing unprecedented demands on our roads and transport infrastructure. The Beattie government's 2004-05 state budget, which delivered a record \$4.1 billion Transport and Main Roads operating budget, shows that this is a government that recognises the need to increase spending on our roads and transport network. We do not want Brisbane to become like Sydney where working people live hours out of the city area and spend an enormous proportion of their time commuting. This year's budget, which is a nine per cent increase, forms part of the current debate about our roads and why they are not just an issue for government but an issue that all of us, as a broader community, need to play a role in addressing. It is no good saying, 'Everybody else can catch a bus, but I will continue to drive.' By the same token, government policy that threatens people not to use roads or forces them to use public transport will not work, either.

The 2004-05 budget consists of \$1.7 billion for Queensland Transport and \$2.3 billion for the Department of Main Roads, including \$1.3 billion for regional roadworks and operations and corporate and technical services. It also contains \$1.1 billion in new money for roads and transport over four years, which is on top of the \$951 million provided since December 2003, for example, an extra \$650 million under the Smart State Building Fund for roads, rail and public transport infrastructure and an extra \$301 million for roads election commitments.

The Beattie government will continue to spend more on transport and roads. We only had to read *The Roads Solution* report in the *Courier-Mail* last week to see how Queensland's average annual spend on our roads is \$228.90 per head—more than twice Victoria's spend of \$89.20 per head. This budget provides a strong foundation for Queensland's economic growth as well as meeting the demands of existing communities, rapid population growth and industry expansion. It provides the need to improve our public transport, reduce private vehicle use, improve our roads and best manage land use planning.

With the committee's concurrence, I would like to make some specific comments about Queensland Transport then perhaps make some comments about Main Roads when the Main Roads session commences. With me today are my Director-General, Bruce Wilson, on my right, and on my far left is the Deputy Director-General, Alan Tesch. On my further right is Helen Stehbens, Executive Director—Rail, Ports and Freight, and next to me on my left is Bob Scheuber, CEO of QR.

The Ministerial Portfolio Statements highlights the achievements in the Transport portfolio for 2003-04 and details how Queensland Transport's programs will be delivered to Queenslanders during 2004-05. The state government has committed \$1.7 billion towards funding the transport task this financial year. We are making public transport accessible and flexible. We have listened to the community about wanting better public transport. For example, since 1998, \$638 million has been spent on the busway network in south-east Queensland. This financial year, the raft of initiatives include the roll out of the public transport integrated ticketing system and initial work on a tunnel and bus station linking Queen Street and Roma Street. On completion, Brisbane will be the only city that I know of in Australia that actually has a bus network going from the south side to the north side under the main street of the capital city. That is unique in Australia and probably unique in most cities of the world, I would have thought, and a wonderful, accessible and convenient public transport system.

Under the department's \$572.2 million, four-year improved transport infrastructure program, which is new money, initiatives funded will include \$342.2 million for rail lines and station upgrades,

track duplication and security work along with \$200 million for bus priority programs. Amounts of \$3 million each have been allocated for the Petrie to Kippa Ring and Gympie Road bus corridors for new and upgraded infrastructure.

This year's Transport budget continues the Beattie government's major investment in rail with \$622 million in capital outlays throughout Queensland Rail. In regional Queensland, \$320 million has been allocated for rail infrastructure for new rail coal lines in central Queensland. Our seven port authorities will spend \$351 million to improve trade efficiencies—an industry whose export commodities are worth about \$21 billion annually with 197 million tonnes of produce going through our ports. Also in the regions, we will spend \$7.4 million on marine based infrastructure along with the dredging of the Coomera River and north channel on the Gold Coast, a long-term dredging strategy at Mooloolaba and infrastructure works at the Port Douglas boat harbour. The Beattie government is a strong supporter of transport development, job creation and economic growth. The 2004-05 transport budget further strengthens this commitment.

The CHAIR: Thank you. The first round of questions is from the non-government members. I invite Miss Simpson, the member for Maroochydore.

Miss SIMPSON: Thank you and good morning, Minister.

Mr LUCAS: Good morning.

Miss SIMPSON: My first question relates to your responsibility to abide by the sessional orders of the parliament to provide answers to questions on notice to the committee secretariat by 10 a.m. yesterday. Given the enormous resources available to your departments, obviously exemplified by the fact that you have had time to do audiovisual displays, can you explain why your departments were unable to meet this deadline, or is this part of a deliberate strategy to frustrate the process of accountability that this committee represents, or is this the way that you would run Queensland as a future Premier?

Mr LUCAS: First of all, thank you for having me today. As you know full well, you and I were actually yesterday morning doing what I think is of critical importance to the people of Queensland. We were at regional community forums. Indeed, we were at regional community forums in your part of Queensland. We were on the Sunshine Coast. I suppose I could have said, 'Look, I have to have the answers to questions on notice answered by 10 a.m. and, therefore, please excuse me from being at the regional community forum' or I could have seen the regional community forum as an important part of the accountability process. I have always been happy to be a minister who is accountable. I apologise for the late supply of the documentation but, in reality, this is about a total process of accountability to the people as well as to this committee through this estimates process. So I apologise to the committee for the lateness of the answers to those questions on notice, but it certainly is a matter that I attended to as soon as I was back.

Miss SIMPSON: I note that there has been a similar practice in regard to answering questions on notice in the parliament as well. I note that with concern, because it does not bode well for appearing to be in control of what is happening in the department.

I have a question in regard to rail. I note that there is a preference of the committee and the minister's staff to address some of these areas first so that staff are able to return to their areas of work. I note on page 117 of the capital statement that \$5.2 million has been allocated to Queensland Rail for the replacement of timber bridges. You may recall media articles expressing concern at the need to reinforce a number of major traffic bridges to minimise the risk of a Granville type disaster. Can you advise if any provision has been made for the reinforcement of road bridges across these trial areas?

Mr LUCAS: Did you say rail or road?

Miss SIMPSON: Rail bridges.

Mr LUCAS: That issue relates to both rail and road. It relates to a number of bridges. In fact, I saw the article in the *Sunday Mail* and indeed also asked my department to address it. We take rail issues extremely seriously. I might ask Bob Scheuber, the CEO of Queensland Rail, or the responsible person at QR to comment on our audit of those bridges.

Mr Scheuber: I might ask Steve Cantwell. He is our Group General Manager—Network Access. He is the person who has been directly involved. So I think that Steve would have the current information.

Mr Cantwell: Thank you. There has been a lot of work done in this area. I believe the question relates to road over rail bridges. The Granville disaster to which Miss Simpson referred was a circumstance where the road over rail bridge collapsed onto a train. There has been significant work done throughout the QR network over recent years to identify high-risk areas for these sorts of incidents. Significant investment has been put into the construction of crash barriers. There is an ongoing risk assessment throughout the network.

Since the Granville disaster there has been a significant evolution in thinking and engineering. The focus nowadays is on investment in the track work to minimise the risk of a train leaving the track,

like the Granville train did. A lot of investment is being placed into the quality of the track to prevent these sorts of incidents occurring. The other risk that has to be taken into account is that these structures and crash barriers can do significantly more damage in an incident than the bridge collapsing onto the train vehicle.

Miss SIMPSON: Thank you very much for your answer. So I take it that work is ongoing.

Mr LUCAS: The other thing is that we constantly assess it. Can I just qualify the honourable member's question?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr LUCAS: Members who use the rail network might note, for example, that under rail bridges these days often concrete will be done in a continuous sheet, so if a train did derail it would bounce off or run along the wall rather than take out a pylon. That is standard process. I am told that our derailment levels in QR are about half of last year. We have spent an enormous amount of money on our track infrastructure. This is not a political point, but from the days of Premier Bjelke-Petersen onwards the Queensland government has spent more money on its rail network than all of the other states combined, because we do treat that very seriously. I treat safety very seriously. Queensland Transport is the independent regulator of QR as well, so QT plays a role in that. On an ongoing basis we are always assessing safety and will continue to do that.

Miss SIMPSON: Minister, I refer to the statement of financial performance on page 1-47 of the MPS and the expenses and revenues administered on behalf of whole-of-government and to the increase of other revenue from a budgeted \$5.9 million to an actual \$27 million, which is explained as being rail corridors not previously brought to book. Will you inform the committee which corridors had not previously been accounted for and why?

Mr LUCAS: I am instructed—I might ask Helen Stehbens to provide some further information for the benefit of the committee—that that is our project in relation to rail corridor identification. In the past, government rail corridors were essentially where the rail corridors were. There was not even a title deed issued for where the rail corridor was. You might have had a block of land on one side and a block of land on the other side and we sort of had what was in between. Obviously that is not consistent with a modern land management system, so we have been in the process of going throughout Queensland with our rail corridors and actually, essentially, issuing surveys and titles for them. How many individual pieces are there?

Ms Stehbens: There are 28,600.

Mr LUCAS: So there are quite a lot. I am told that the figure results in increased identification and understanding of our rail corridor, together with the addition of a further rail corridor, that is, Hail Creek. I will ask Helen Stehbens to provide some more information on that.

Ms Stehbens: Could I ask that the question be repeated?

Miss SIMPSON: I was after an explanation as to which corridors had not previously been accounted for.

Ms Stehbens: I do not have a detailed list with me, but it is as the minister explained. In 1995 the rail corridors were taken as strategic rail corridor land into Queensland Transport on behalf of the state. Previously it was under the department of railways, as it then was. There was an old piece of legislation that basically said that wherever there was a railway therefore there was a railway corridor. However, we have gone through the process of putting into the titles office every piece of rail land so that now everybody can go into the titles office and see all of the rail land there. Some of these administrative accounting processes are related to that.

Mr LUCAS: I would be happy to give you a list.

Miss SIMPSON: That would be great. Minister, I would like to ask some questions with regard to the Redcliffe rail corridor study. I refer to the future developments reported for the Rail, Ports and Aviation Systems output and in particular to the review of the metropolitan rail network, including network expansion. Minister, how much was paid for the Redcliffe rail corridor study, which was effectively scuttled by the department failing to provide vital costings to the study on the basis of commercial-in-confidence considerations? Minister, did the department not know that failure to provide this data would make this study meaningless from the outset? Why was taxpayers' money wasted as a result?

Mr LUCAS: The propositions that you are putting to me as part of your question are wrong. The cost of the rail study was \$576,000. The rail study was not just about the current economics of establishing rail from Petrie to Kippa-Ring, because that is something that will be revised on an ongoing basis depending on the passenger numbers in the area and other trends in our public transport network. It did a whole lot of things including noise modelling and environmental impact assessments. There are some sensitive environmental areas there. There is also a whole lot of modelling of transport use. It is actually a very detailed report. I cannot remember how many chapters are in it—I read it at the time—but there are numerous chapters, only a few of which talk about the economics of it.

In relation to the economics of it, what was always going to happen with the Petrie to Kippa-Ring rail corridor was that consideration was going to be given to a public-private partnership to see whether there was an opportunity to involve the private sector in it. Once you do that you have very important competition rules that apply to the department. Bob Scheuber has two hats. One is as CEO of the company that regulates the rails and below. Access has to be given on a fair and reasonable basis. The other is with QR as a rail operator. One has to be very careful that how information is provided by QR is not seen as giving them a competitive advantage if you are in a public-private partnership situation in terms of other people who may wish to participate in the process or otherwise. Having said that, I do think it was unfortunate that perhaps we could not have looked better at how we might provide that information in terms of the relevant costings of it.

I want to make it clear to the committee that the government is not ruling out rail on the Petrie to Kippa-Ring corridor. We are not ruling it out. What we are saying is that at present there is insufficient benefit to justify its construction. Having said that, we have to look at what we are doing, because it is important that we look after the people out there. \$7 million, including \$3 million in 2004-05, has been allocated from the Smart State Building Fund for public transport infrastructure improvements in the area, including bus priority measures between Petrie and Kippa-Ring and improved bus stops along Anzac Avenue. These will lead to improved bus running times, shorter waiting times and improved access to major centres. \$3.6 million will be allocated for a new bus-rail interchange and new park-and-ride facilities at Petrie station in the next three years from the rail intermodal facilities fund. That will have a benefit to people not just in the Petrie to Kippa-Ring rail corridor.

Miss SIMPSON: Minister, with respect, you keep saying that you have not ruled out rail, but you spent \$576,000 on a study that the department then bagged because it did not provide the relevant data to apparently provide the commercial facts of life. Why can that relevant data not be supplied to the consultants on a confidential basis so that the people of Redcliffe can be provided with an independent view of the potential of a rail connection?

Mr LUCAS: I am happy to answer the question again. I thought I answered it before.

Miss SIMPSON: It is a lot of money to spend on a study that the department actually withheld information for. Surely there should have been a mechanism that provided it as commercial-in-confidence.

The CHAIR: I remind the member for Maroochydore, under sessional order 25, to stick to questions and not make a speech.

Mr LUCAS: As I said to you before, the study was not just about the costings. In fact, the costings can be redone at any particular time. That is not a major aspect of the study.

Miss SIMPSON: Could you give a commitment to redo the costings now?

Mr LUCAS: There is no need to do it now, because the department examined those costings in the light of the report. I have made it quite clear that the government is not ruling out rail to Kippa-Ring. The government is saying that at the appropriate time we will look at putting rail there. That is why the corridor was acquired. That is why the corridor is protected.

It is quite common practice throughout the world to have a look at when rail corridors actually justify their construction. They are very, very expensive. For example, I think the ongoing cost to run rail on that corridor would be about \$30 million a year. That is not the capital cost; that is the ongoing subsidy. I have some members here from regional Queensland who also have a right to say, 'I want the government to have a look at what it is doing in terms of funding services in our part of the world, just as much as in Brisbane.' So what we are doing is looking at how we might graduate the services.

Frankly, one of the disappointing things about the survey was that it did not indicate that some people were keen to use the public transport network. That is a broader education issue that we will need to address. Honourable members also have to look at it this way. Besides the \$30 million per year ongoing subsidy that it would require, it would also have to plug into the main Caboolture line. Once it has done that then you have the question of whether you divert train services away from it. There are capacity issues there.

Ultimately in your area we have the CAMCOS corridor. We would hope in the longer term that we would have rail running on that. What capacity issues do you have there? These are not simple questions, so the costing is just one of the particular issues. However, what is appropriate with governments—I am happy to answer a question if you want to ask me about what we are doing about rail corridor preservation and acquisition, because we are doing a lot—is that we make decisions now that do not cut off options in the future. Nothing as a result of this report is about cutting off options in the future.

We could not be more open about it. The report is publicly available. We are happy to debate those issues. It would have been nice if someone had come up with a public-private partnership to assist us in relation to this. They did not do that, but I do see it still as a priority. That is why we are spending that money on buses in the Petrie to Kippa-Ring corridor as well.

Mr WELLINGTON: Minister, I refer you to page 1-3 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements, where you refer to a range of transport studies budgeted for this year. In light of your government's acknowledgment of the rapid population growth on the Sunshine Coast and the limited spare capacity for additional commuter Citytrain services between Nambour and Caboolture, when will you prioritise the planning of the duplication of the important section of the main rail line between Landsborough and Nambour in the budget, as I note that at the moment you have only prioritised the Caboolture to Landsborough line?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for his question. For people living in your part of the world, ultimately the way we will encourage people to freely commute using public transport is by making it as accessible and convenient as possible. There are a number of issues we need to address in terms of that. If I could give a brief roads analogy, it is a bit like the Ipswich Motorway and the Toowoomba bypass. The Toowoomba bypass is critically important—that is, the second range crossing in Toowoomba—but people on the Darling Downs also know that you have to improve the traffic volumes into Ipswich.

In the longer term Landsborough to Nambour is important to us, but people who come from Nambour benefit from the rail corridor improvements we do from Landsborough south. You have to go on the same corridor. If you like, you start at the front and work your way out, because you can gain more benefits by doing that. If we did Landsborough to Nambour first then we would bring it back onto a single track there. The other thing I should say there is that the alignment in relation to a number of parts of the track on the northern outskirts of Brisbane is quite poor. It is a last century alignment. I went in in the early 1900s, so it is a very old alignment that sort of snakes around.

You might recall that last year there was some discussion about upgrading the track in the general electorate of Glass House and there was a bit of dissension there on a public basis about some of the options. The government said that we will not be proceeding with what was described as option 2. I am about to go out to the community to discuss some other options in relation to straightening that track, but ultimately you might be able to save 10 or 12 minutes on the journey from your part of the world in fixing up the alignment there alone. Could I have an extension please, Mr Chair?

The CHAIR: Yes, you may.

Mr LUCAS: Fixing the alignment up there will have significant ongoing benefits, so I hope to do that. But one of the key issues in terms of that alignment is that it allows you to significantly increase speeds, and that is what we want to do. The other thing of course is that, as we duplicate, that will bring rolling stock. As services are rolled out, rolling stock requirements are greater as well, and that is something we are addressing as part of the money that we are currently spending on what we call MetTrip 1, and I will talk about that a little bit later.

The CHAIR: Thank you. The time for opposition questions has expired. I call the member for Cook.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, I note on page 1-11 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements that Queensland Transport intends to commence implementation of the urban rail infrastructure package under the Smart State Building Fund program as well as improvements to rail intermodal facilities. Can you please outline initiatives to be progressed and expected delivery dates? Why has it not been possible to simply schedule additional services on some heavily patronised lines such as the Gold Coast line?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question. QT and QR developed the MetTrip proposal for additional Citytrain rolling stock and infrastructure that seeks to cater for patronage growth, particularly in the morning peak requirements to 2011. That is just organic growth, for want of a better word. It is not the further growth that we will get as we extend the network. That is because demand for Citytrain is growing.

The 2004-05 budget provided funding for MetTrip of \$742.2 million—not to be sneezed at—to support additional Citytrain patronage growth and implementation of TransLink's integrated public transport network in south-east Queensland. MetTrip stage 1 funding is \$400 million, with expenditure of \$35.6 million budgeted for this year for track infrastructure capacity upgrades on the Gold Coast-Beenleigh corridor. That will include \$184 million for the third track from Salisbury to Kuraby—so there will be a third track there now—and duplication from Ormeau to Coomera.

There will be additional trains for improved services on the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast—the member for Nicklin will be happy about this—Caboolture and Ferny Grove corridors, \$114 million for 10 three-car trains. They are not cheap are they, Bob? How much are they each? You do the maths. They are \$11.4 million.

Mr Scheuber: No, they are just under \$9.5 million for a three-car set.

Mr LUCAS: All, I might add, AC traction; is that correct?

Mr Scheuber: On those cars?

Mr LUCAS: Yes.

Mr Scheuber: No, they do not have AC traction, not on the suburban cars. We have AC traction on our diesel electric locos—yes, they have non-traction systems, yes. Sorry, my apologies.

Mr LUCAS: Sorry, yes, they are; you stand corrected. They are all AC traction and very, very quiet as well, which is good for local residents. There is some \$25 million for rail/bus interchanges and rail station park and rides; \$50 million for various track supporting infrastructure such as noise walls and open level crossing safety; \$11 million for ongoing overhaul and refurbishment of older trains; \$16 million to upgrade station buildings and improve access, safety and security of stations.

The balance of MetTrip funding in the 2004-05 budget is \$342.2 million for stage 2, and that will start in 2005-06. That includes a number of further projects that I discussed before in terms of rolling out our network including, I am pleased to announce today, some \$31.5 million for duplicating the Mitchelton to Keperra track. That is a single track at the moment and we will be duplicating that track. We expect to have that work done by 2008-09. That is one of our busiest lines, incidentally, on the urban network. That will be a major benefit to people in that corridor out to Ferny Grove on the Ferny Hills line.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, I note on page 1-9 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements QT has negotiated the Savannahlander Transport services contract with Cairns Kuranda Steam Ltd to operate the rail service from Cairns to Forsayth. Why is the government contributing \$1.3 million in funds in 2004-05 to support the ongoing operation of the Savannahlander tourist rail service?

Mr LUCAS: First of all, can I say that we entered into the Cairns Kuranda Steam partnership when they commenced operation of the Savannahlander tourist rail service on 3 March 2004. We went through a private interest expression of interest process. The aim was to determine if the private sector could maximise the potential of the service at equal or lower cost to government than the previous service. In a sense, it was a passenger and freight service. It really is a tourist service now. That is what it is about. It is not there to get from point A to point B in the quickest possible time. I have a leaflet here if any honourable members want to have a look at it. I am going to be opening it next week. I think it is a wonderful initiative.

We talk about Australia and Queensland as being the outback. Man, this is the outback! Not that it is that far off the coast, but when you have a look at the leaflets and the pictures you can really see the wonderful parts of it. The line is actually 423 kilometres long, so think of Victoria in those terms. This is a wonderful tourist opportunity from Cairns to Forsayth. It will be a once weekly return service. It provides the opportunity to combine the unique rail experience. I will just show you where it is for those of you who do not know. It is just that little bit there. Can you see that on the map? It actually goes quite a long way for a tourist rail experience. It provides opportunities—

The CHAIR: Excuse me, Minister, are you going to table that document?

Mr LUCAS: I will give you a copy of the leaflet and we will table the map as well. It provides the opportunity to combine the unique rail experience with visits to places such as the Undarra lava tubes and the Chillagoe limestone caves in the Savannah region. It provides tour operators in the towns along the rail corridor the opportunity to promote the region to tourists on the Savannahlander, generating economic benefit to the region. Queensland Transport has entered into a six and a half year contract with Cairns Kuranda Steam. The anticipated operator will provide increased benefits in terms of regional development and tourism promotion along the rail corridor and surrounding district. The contract provides for payments of up to \$1.3 million for the Savannahlander service. We previously obviously had to pay a CSO to QR to operate it.

The contract is structured to incentivise the operator to increase patronage, while reducing the reliance on the community service obligation payment. It is still very important to those communities there. One of the things that we did is reopen the bridge. The bridge was washed away. I think they might have it on the leaflet. The bridge was in a pretty bad way. Most of the time there is no water there and then these massive floods come through and wash it all away. What was the cost of that? It cost about \$1 million to replace the bridge.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, I on page 1-10 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement, QT continued with the evaluation of level crossings using the risk scoring matrix on the non-commercial network and developing work programs. Can the minister please explain what this program is, and how it is making level crossings safer in Queensland?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question. The Rail Safety Unit in the Land Transport and Safety Division of Queensland Transport established a level crossing safety steering group to consider safety at level crossings. The member for Mirani is someone who is, of course, acutely interested in that, representing a sugar cane seat. In fact, I went for a ride the other day in the cab of the Cairns tilt train. It gives you a great appreciation when you are sitting in the cab and are going through cane areas and you see the enormous number of access points that there are when you are in a train. You actually appreciate some of stresses that it puts on drivers when they think someone might pop out from somewhere.

The charter is to monitor the safety of road and rail users at railway level crossings, prioritise and recommend cost-effective improvements to implementing agencies, and to monitor and report to

stakeholders on the implementation and effectiveness of improvements. The group includes Queensland Transport, Main Roads, Queensland Rail, the Australian Sugar Milling Council, LGAQ and the Queensland Police Service.

We developed the risk scoring matrix to determine the adequacy of current protection at level crossings and to indicate any additional cost-effective controls required. Bob Scheuber was telling me the other day how much it costs to signalise a level crossing. It is extremely expensive.

Mr Scheuber: It can cost up to \$1 million, depending on the complexity of the crossing.

Mr LUCAS: So the Australian Transport Council approved the model to become the national standard for evaluation of risks and controls at crossings. We have provided the national basis. I think, on a proportionate basis, our rail level crossing accidents are less than our proportion of population in Queensland—I will confirm that—which is pretty amazing, given that we have such a diverse network. Great credit goes to QR and local authorities and others who actually participate in that.

The Queensland government provided \$17 million in 2005-06 for the upgrading of public level crossings on rail lines. Risk assessments are currently being undertaken. To date, there has been \$4.3 million of work completed out of a programmed \$11.3 million for the year ending 2004. The number of major accidents and fatalities occurring at public level crossings continues to decline in Queensland. Up to 27 May 2004—touch wood—there were two accidents and no deaths. This compares favourably with the statistics published by the ATSB for level crossing facilities between 1997 and 2002 across Australia. As you can see, there is a lot of work being done in Queensland and nationally to ensure that level crossings are safe, but they are dangerous. Where cars come into dealings with trains they are inherently dangerous.

I also wanted to speak about a level crossing in the Brisbane area that is a major concern to people in this community. I do have a photograph of this. That is the Acacia Ridge level crossing where the standard gauge railway line crosses Beaudesert Road.

The CHAIR: Time has expired.

Mr LUCAS: Could I have an extension?

Mr O'BRIEN: Sure.

Mr LUCAS: If you actually have a look at the queuing that is on this level crossing, it is the worst queuing of any level crossing. You will see a standard gauge line there in the next photo. You see the enormous queuing that is there. It will cost about \$50 million to separate that crossing. We have allocated \$25 million in the state budget to do that. I have called upon the federal government to play their part in relation to that. It is a standard gauge rail link. It is the interstate rail line. How much money did they put into AusLink and rail? It was \$700 million to \$800 million; I have not got the exact figure with me. They are giving us \$7 million in Queensland for some communications work on a standard gauge line. If they actually want to do something seriously, they could match our \$25 million and help us eliminate that major issue for people in that part of the world. Think of how much money is being wasted in that traffic being like that.

The CHAIR: Minister, will you table those photographs?

Mr LUCAS: Yes.

The CHAIR: I have some concerns about the laser. Be very, very careful.

Mr LUCAS: I will not point it at anyone; I am only pointing at the pictures.

The CHAIR: I call upon Mrs Smith, the member for Burleigh.

Mrs SMITH: Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, also on page 1-10 of the MPS statements I note that Queensland Transport intends to negotiate the transfer of disused railway corridor land to local authorities for community transport related purposes such as walking, riding and cycle trails. Can you please comment on how QT intends to facilitate these transfers and whether any other options are available for these disused rail corridors?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member. Presently the management of disused rail corridors, which are called non-rail corridors, rests with Queensland Transport. These non-rail corridors are being held by Queensland Transport for possible future transport purposes. It may no longer be economic to have rail services on them, but things might change in terms of population development, so we want to hang on to the corridor, but the corridor is also a significant expense to government sitting there. We want to look at what opportunities we can have to maximise its use by members of the community. We are negotiating with a number of local councils with a view to subleasing these corridors to councils for community transport related purposes—walking, riding and cycling. I should say, for example, that Hervey Bay council—and I give them full credit for this—have actually acquired the corridor there rather than leasing it from us. You will see the wonderful bike path there. I think they are laying fibre along it as well, the old route there. It is a wonderfully used corridor now by the local community.

When QT and councils agree on terms of proposed subleases, maintenance responsibility and overall management of non-rail corridors will then be transferred to those councils. That is a saving to the taxpayer and at the same time a benefit to those communities. While no long-term leases of non-rail corridors have yet been finalised, we are hoping to settle one or more leases in the coming year. Due to the fact that QT will ultimately retain these corridors on behalf of the state to facilitate any possible future transport purpose, subleasing to councils is viewed as a flexible option to provide immediate community benefit while still preserving corridors in the long run.

You might want to have a bus network there or the like. As an example, in 1995 the Hervey Bay City Council purchased from QR the section of rail corridor from Pialba to Urangan and developed that section into a mobility corridor. In fact, you have got to stand out of the way for the gophers; they go flying through there. It is a bit of a gopher club. It is actually really wonderful to see the community socialising and riding bikes, on their gophers or just walking along that corridor.

We have been negotiating with the Hervey Bay council for approximately 18 months for a proposed sublease for the remaining non-rail corridor between Takura and Pialba stations. The inclusion of the remaining section from Takura to Pialba will provide approximately 15 kilometres of multipurpose recreational transport use corridor from the outer area of Hervey Bay to the Urangan foreshores for pedestrians, motorised scooters, wheelchairs and bicycles.

Mrs SMITH: Thank you. In relation to the design of public transport smart card technology to be introduced in south-east Queensland, will you tell us the present status of the project, how the system will be introduced and what benefit the smart card or automated fare collection system will provide to the travelling public?

Mr LUCAS: We are committed to the forward planning required to manage the demands of south-east Queensland as one of the fastest growing regions in Australia. That increased population growth means increased traffic and congestion problems. Building roads alone will not solve transport problems. Experience overseas shows that a more efficient, convenient and customer responsive public transport system is required to manage long-term transport issues.

Smart card technology has been used successfully in cities with large populations, like London and Hong Kong. Perth is in the process of a pilot at the moment. The pilot started when I was over there for the Australian Transport Council a few months ago. I should say, quite proudly, that Queensland electric trains that were made in Maryborough run on the Perth network.

The smart card automated fare collection system will provide a platform for the Queensland government to better influence travel behaviours and habits benefiting the travelling public of Queensland. It will also provide significantly better quality travel data and will facilitate better informed network planning and marketing. The design of the system is currently being finalised through the combined efforts of the TransLink smart card system design review team, TransLink business partners—that is, QR, Brisbane Transport, Brisbane City Council—and private bus operators and the contractor. The system will be manufactured and delivered over the rest of this year concurrent with the development and deployment of all required supporting systems and services. We expect it to be completely rolled out by the end of 2006. The first stage of the roll-out to the regional centres will commence in the second half of 2005. This will occur after there has been a test of the system. The pilot will become operational in 2005.

The smart card pilot project will cover all stations on the Shorncliffe rail corridor and the associated private bus services on the Redcliffe peninsular and the Sandgate area. The pilot is pivotal to the successful launch of the overall smart card system and public education campaign, as TransLink is able to learn from this target area to better inform and guide the overall system roll-out. To better inform TransLink's decisions regarding smart card marketing, education campaigns and communications strategies, the TransLink smart card marketing and design review team will gather data from stakeholder and community groups, market research and consultation.

During the pilot project, passengers will see changes, beginning with the introduction of smart card technology systems and operational services. One of the things that I wanted to say about smart cards is that in the past, before we had TransLink and before we had integrated ticketing, we did not really know where people went. I was on a train a little while ago speaking with someone from my electorate. She was going to visit her mother who was at the Eventide Nursing Home at Sandgate—

The CHAIR: Time, Minister.

Mr LUCAS: Could I have an extension?

Mrs SMITH: You may.

Mr LUCAS: Not only has she had a substantial saving in what she spends under TransLink; in the past we would not have known that she was actually catching a train from the Wynnum North station to Sandgate. We just did not know that. With an integrated ticket we do know that. Ultimately with a smart card what you get is a really good look at where people are going—if they want to use it, that is.

You do not have to use it. That then allows us to plan routes a lot better because we know when people are going where and on what occasions.

If you are using current public transport to get from point A to point B to point C, you really actually want to get from point A to point C. In the past we did not know that you wanted to get from point A to point C. We just knew it was a fare between point A and point B and a fare between point B and point C. Under TransLink and the smart card system, what we can say is that these people are wanting to go from point A to point C. Nothing annoys me more than seeing a bus that is empty. That is just a total waste of taxpayers' money. When we are actually finding out with smart cards and TransLink how people are using public transport, what we can do is commit those moneys to providing better services. TransLink is not about actually reducing expenditure on public transport. Indeed, under the current TransLink route structure I think it is \$5 million or \$6 million a year more that it will cost us on the same networks because we have actually, for many users, reduced the cost of travelling on them. That is what this is about.

As to how it would work, what you would do is go to a rail station, there would be a scanner there and you would walk up to the scanner—it is a proximity card so if you have got a handbag or a wallet you could sort of wave it past it, that is how it is read.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for questions by government members has expired. I now call on the member for Nicklin, Mr Wellington.

Mr WELLINGTON: If I could take you back to your answer to my last question about when does the government propose to upgrade the duplication of the Landsborough to Nambour rail corridor, I note in your answer to my question on notice that you indicated there was no immediate plans for an upgrade at this stage. Can I just go back? We are not trying to jump the gun on the Caboolture to Landsborough link; we are aware of the process. What we want to know is, in light of the acknowledged significant population growth that is happening, in light of the lack of the capacity on the railway line at the moment for increased commuter travel and in light of your recognition this morning about the pressures that we are under, when do you plan to commence the study on the upgrading, the duplication—call it what you like—of the Landsborough to Nambour link, which is part of, and crucially part of, the Citytrain network?

Mr LUCAS: As I have indicated to the honourable member, we have a significant commitment to rail infrastructure roll-out and have had in the past as well. Under MetTrip stage 1 we are actually physically putting rails out there. Queensland is a state that is developing its Citytrain network. The work that is being done on the Gold Coast line, the Salisbury to Kuraby third track, benefits people from Beenleigh up as well those on the Gold Coast. I announced before that we are going to duplicate the line from Mitchelton to Keperra. We have a whole other number of priorities that we want to look at, including, as I said to you, improving track alignment in the area north of Brisbane. Our commitment is substantial: MetTrip stage 1 is \$400 million. \$184 million of that is track infrastructure upgrade. To give you an idea, just from Mitchelton to Keperra on an existing corridor—so I do not have to acquire a corridor or anything like that—it will cost \$31.5 million. It is an extremely expensive proposition, but we will do it. There is not money currently budgeted for Landsborough to Nambour. That is one of the things ultimately that we will do.

On a related issue, in the Main Roads portfolio we are currently undertaking with the Commonwealth government a study of a Gympie bypass. The Commonwealth have only funded a study with us and it has not given us the money to build the bypass—that is quite a long time in the future. But as part of that we will have a look at if we might incorporate our rail corridor in it as well. The country there is rather difficult. I am sorry to disappoint the member, but there is no money budgeted at the present time for Landsborough to Nambour. It is clearly a matter of doing first things first and it is something that we think is very, very important. I should also say that in addition to the track infrastructure issue we will have an ongoing program of improving services. I indicated earlier that part of MetTrip is those 10 three-car trains that will help us improve services to people on the Sunshine Coast as well.

Honourable member, please understand that I do see it as important but we have to do the other things first. It is one of our greatest challenges: to make sure that we have people using public transport. When you are at Nambour it is actually better than driving because it is such a long trip. That is something that will continue to be important to the government.

Mr WELLINGTON: I will continue to ask the question in future estimates. Perhaps I might get a more favourable answer as to when that duplication/upgrade will happen.

Mr LUCAS: I will be delighted to do it.

Mr WELLINGTON: It will have to happen one day. The next question is in relation to your answer to my question about the sale of railway tickets on the north coast railway line. Again this is part of the Citytrain network. My question is how long will people be able to board the Citytrain network between Nambour and the stations in between where there are no ticket vending machines, no railway staff in attendance, like at the Eudlo Railway Station, and not have to pay until they get off the train?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question and I refer, of course, to the answer to the question on notice that I have provided. Sometimes with more remote stations it is a cost-benefit analysis. There is a cost in having staff at those stations. You have to weigh that against the level of revenue you get from those tickets. One of the things that we will be able to do with smart card technology is that once that is rolled out then you will have the opportunity to pay by scanning your card where you go. People say to me, 'Look, are you going to put barriers at a railway station at Gympie North'—it is not practical to do that—or, 'Are you going to put barriers at an isolated rail station?' No, we will not do that because we do not need to do that with smart card technology.

People will simply be encouraged to scan the smart card where they get on because if they do not do that—when we have smart card technology fully rolled out—they will pay the maximum fare when they have to go through the barriers at our central railway station at Roma Street, Central, Brunswick Street, et cetera. That is how we will ensure in the longer term that that is done.

There are 14 offsite rail agents selling tickets, of which five are situated on the north coast from Beerburrum to Eumundi. I actually met members of the Queensland Newsagents Federation the other day and they were talking to me about their concerns about rolling out services further in relation to sale of tickets. I am committed to making tickets, as far as we can reasonably make them, as available as possible and I am happy to continue to work in that regard. It is a balancing exercise. I would not want to spend \$1,000 to get \$500 in revenue. We would expect to rely on people's honesty in terms of doing that. The vast majority of people are honest people. You sit there at the counter at Central and you do not have a whole lot of people coming there saying, 'Look, yeah, I got on at Brunswick Street', 'I got on at Brunswick Street', 'I got on at Brunswick Street.' They are pretty decent, honest people. It is a matter of what is an appropriate expenditure of our money.

Mr WELLINGTON: You said the introduction of stage 2 of TransLink will allow passengers to tag on using a smart card. When do you anticipate stage 2 will be up and running?

Mr LUCAS: I think that I indicated piloting next year and then 2006 the whole thing. As I said to you, it is not a question of expensive barriers and things like that. You do not need to do that. It is a question of people scanning the smart card. One of the advantages of the smart card, which I should say and I did not mention before, is that it will give people the opportunity to have a stored value on it. People might want to have cash on it or, alternatively, people might want to have it linked to their credit cards. Some people do not get around to putting money on it, so you whenever its value falls below \$10 or \$5 you could recharge it with \$20 from your credit card. It is about flexibility. This is a wonderful way to provide people with that sort of transport and operational flexibility.

In some places they want to make people use public transport. I do not believe in doing that. I believe in making people want to use public transport rather than forcing people to use public transport. I can understand why the honourable member is so keen on it because you have a wonderful lifestyle in your electorate and you want to keep that wonderful lifestyle, but people do need to get to and from places for work and for other things.

Let me say to the member for Nicklin that one of the real advantages of TransLink as a network for people in your part of the world is that you actually only pay to go to the central city if you are coming into Brisbane. A student from the University of Queensland coming from Nambour would actually only pay for the trip from Nambour to Brisbane city and then come out the other side. That student could go on the train to Toowong and then catch a bus to the University of Queensland. That person would only pay to go to the city and then anything else is free. There is the additional benefit that if you are on a daily ticket, which is essentially a return ticket or twice a single, you can actually catch a ferry at lunch time or go back later. It is a wonderful advantage. I will table that TransLink map.

Dr FLEGG: In your opening remarks you referred to the growth in Queensland and the high level of per capital spending on rail compared with New South Wales and Victoria. This is as we would expect given the size of the state and the fact that we are still developing the network. I refer you to page 113 of the Capital Statement where it states that Queensland Rail is allocating \$622 million to capital outlays. Last year capital outlays were \$614 million. So without the \$35 million of borrowed money from Smart State Building Fund we would actually be going backwards in terms of capital outlays. Can you tell me why we have such a low priority for investing in capital infrastructure for rail and why we cannot keep pace with inflation or cost increases?

Mr LUCAS: Far from it. There are two aspects of outlays in relation to our rail network. The first aspect is what we do on our rail freight network and the second aspect is what we do on our passenger network. The 2004-05 budget has \$622 million in rail investment for Queensland. Some \$194.8 million is for infrastructure works associated with the new coal projects in the Fitzroy region, including the Rolleston spur line. \$35.6 million is for the first stage of MetTrip. That involves expenditure on track infrastructure, station upgrades, security and intermodal works. \$5 million goes towards the acquisition of rolling stock to respond to strong patronage growth. \$20 million out of the total project cost is for disability standards. \$18 million is for the continuing replacement of timber bridges. \$17 million out of \$88 million is to continue the upgrade of the electric locomotives. \$8 million is for the construction of noise barriers on the network. \$7.5 million is for the finalisation of the rail spur line to Hail Creek.

We all know the work that is being done in relation to the north cost line and the tilt train. When I was up there the other day they were putting in concrete sleepers to improve the speed limits on the Townsville to Cairns section. It will allow us to go at 80 kilometres an hour. We have a significant investment. In terms of our coal network, a lot of it depends upon timings for new projects to come on line and whether they are ones that necessitate new rail infrastructure. But Citytrain and our regional rail services are significant beneficiaries from our capital investment as well. It is something that necessarily is a little variable. In addition to MetTrip stage 1, under this budget we have announced an additional \$342.2 million for the commencement of MetTrip stage 2 in 2005-06. That is a significant commitment to our rail network in Queensland.

Miss SIMPSON: I have a question in relation to the Capital Statement and in particular chart 1.1 which shows capital outlays by purpose. This chart shows that the expenditure on transport infrastructure has fallen from 32 per cent last year to 30 per cent this year. Does this proposed capital expenditure include the \$86.2 million from the Smart State Building Fund? Why has the proportion of expenditure on transport infrastructure been reduced?

Mr LUCAS: I think you are better off looking in absolute terms.

Miss SIMPSON: Is that \$86.2 million in that lump sum?

The CHAIR: Do not interrupt, please.

Mr LUCAS: Chair, do you mind if I get clarification on that?

The CHAIR: It is your call.

Miss SIMPSON: Some 32 per cent of the budget last year was spent on transport infrastructure. This year 30 per cent will be spent on transport infrastructure. Does this amount also include the \$86.2 million from the Smart State Building Fund?

Mr LUCAS: I am told that it would.

Miss SIMPSON: So the Smart State Building Fund is actually within that capital expenditure. Why has the proportion of expenditure on transport infrastructure been reduced?

Mr LUCAS: You always have to be careful when you look at pie charts in relation to the proportion of expenditure. It depends on the nature of expenditure in other areas. We make enormous expenditure on energy infrastructure. If we commit to a significantly greater spend when it comes to those other areas, then in proportionate terms it will result in a differing proportion for transport. The operating budget of \$4 billion is a record. \$1.7 billion is for QT and \$2.3 billion for Main Roads. That is a 14 per cent increase on last year's \$3.5 billion QT-Main Roads budget. There are significant improvements. There will be a \$1.1 billion boost in new money over four years for roads and transport infrastructure.

The proportion in the pie charts may depend upon what is being spent in other areas. There is a significant ramping up in terms of money. Unlike the Commonwealth, whose money comes in about years four or five under AusLink, ours comes in significant terms next year for both Transport and Main Roads. The other way you could improve the pie chart is by slashing expenditure in other areas. One hundred per cent of a very small amount might not be as good as a lesser per cent of a very large amount. This is a very strong budget for Queensland Transport and Main Roads and I am very proud of that.

Miss SIMPSON: I note that quite a number of capital projects shown in the Capital Statement for Queensland Transport involve funding from the Smart State Building Fund which means borrowing funds to provide infrastructure. Can you provide, on notice if necessary, the actual level of funds for the projects identified?

Mr LUCAS: I am told that that is a Treasury matter. I am happy to pass that on to the Treasurer. QT receives those funds from the consolidated revenue fund. So that is a matter that ought to be properly addressed to the Treasurer.

Miss SIMPSON: I will rephrase that. With regard to the projects that you are spending Smart State funding on, could I have a list of the totals of those projects, the proportion which are Smart State funded and the balance which are funded out of consolidated revenue?

Mr LUCAS: I will table it for you now.

Miss SIMPSON: Does that have a detailed breakdown of the projects?

Mr LUCAS: I will table that for you.

Miss SIMPSON: I refer to output performance Road Use Management. The last dot point under Future Developments on page 1-21 of the MPS relates to the implementation of Travelsafe Committee recommendations. In 1999 the Travelsafe Committee of the parliament held inquiry No. 29 into drug-driving in Queensland and recommended that the Queensland Police Service and Queensland Transport conduct a formal trial of the guidelines for drug impairment assessment by police. Will you tell the committee the results of the trial?

Mr LUCAS: Does the committee have any QR matters?

Miss SIMPSON: I think we have completed our QR questions. Thank you to the staff. We will have TransLink questions.

Mr LUCAS: That is fine. I will not let him go away.

Mr LUCAS: I think Victoria are trialling that at the moment.

Mr Kursius: An anti drug-driving committee has been formed. That committee is in fact reviewing the anti drug-driving activities that are being undertaken in other jurisdictions and internationally. The committee has considered both legislation and current anti drug-driving activities undertaken in Queensland. Currently, members of the Queensland Police Service are actually able to detain drivers that they believe may be impaired through taking either illicit drugs or across-the-counter drugs in combination. If necessary, they can order or pursue drivers in terms of blood testing, et cetera.

The challenge for the anti drug-driving approach is that, at the moment, there are very few tests that have a broad range in detecting drugs. We believe that the Victorian trials currently under way will detect a limited number of drugs, not a full range. Certainly it focuses only on illicit drugs. Currently, road testing takes some time and costs in the vicinity of \$35 to \$40 per test. The challenge in the anti drug-driving area in terms of roadside testing is to find the cost-effective test.

The CHAIR: The time has expired for questions from non-government members.

Mr LUCAS: We are happy to provide some information in relation to the Victorian trial if the committee wants some background information on how it is going and what it is currently doing.

Miss SIMPSON: And what the result is with regard to consideration for Queensland.

Mrs SMITH: I would like to return to TransLink and in particular the stage one paper-based integrated public transport ticketing initiative which commenced in July 2004. Would you provide us with information with regard to ticketing products introduced, how these products were developed and the benefits that will flow from their introduction?

Mr LUCAS: I would be delighted to. The implementation of stage one integrated ticketing was a complex process involving significant analysis and policy review. Managing this process required a diverse range of skills, knowledge and experience. In fact, Mick McShea did not have any grey hair prior to starting this.

TransLink worked in partnership with participating south-east Queensland transport operators to ensure that this was achieved. Stage one of TransLink's integrated ticketing system is one of rationalisation. We have reduced the number of individual ticket types in use from over 200. There were 14 operators and 200 ticket types in use. We have reduced the number in south-east Queensland to approximately 30. We would like to reduce it even further.

Five TransLink products can be issued by all operators and used throughout the network. Some operator specific products have been retained in stage one. These can be issued by nominated operators only. Examples of those are the transport private bus operator 10-trip tickets and Surfside Busline's easy freedom and gold multiday tourist passes.

Fully integrated TransLink ticket products are, firstly, a TransLink single. This is a one-way ticket to your destination, including transfers within two hours between any TransLink service. Its fixed price includes unlimited travel on bus, train and BCC ferries within the valid zones.

The TransLink daily replaces the old return ticket. I am a fan of this one. With the old return ticket you from got point A to point B and that was it. The daily is a day rover within those zones for the same price—that is, twice the single ticket cost. Some of the benefits are that you can buy a ticket for zones one to five which you can use on all the TransLink services—bus, train and BCC ferries—throughout the day providing greater flexibility and free travel.

You could catch a bus from Wynnum West in my electorate to Wynnum station and come in on the train. At lunch time you could go for a ride on the ferry and then come back in that evening if you wanted to go to dinner with your friends. This is about making it accessible. It is understanding that we have a significant investment in providing the services. Having more people on the services in non-peak hours is all the better. It means taxpayers' money being used more effectively.

TransLink off-peak daily means discounted unlimited travel between 9 a.m. and 3.30 p.m. and after 7 p.m. Monday to Friday. That is a 20 per cent discount off the daily price. People using the Brisbane City Council bus network are very happy because they did not have weeklies and monthlies. They were scrapped some years ago. Under TransLink you have weeklies and monthlies. It means unlimited travel within the zones purchased for one week—seven consecutive days from the date of issue and valid on all TransLink services. It is the equivalent cost of only four daily tickets. So you get a weekly for a four daily ticket cost. Buy four days and you get three for free, so that is a big benefit. With regard to the monthly unlimited travel within zones purchased for one calendar month from the date of issue—you buy one ticket again and you can use all the mechanisms—it is the cost of 16 daily tickets. So essentially you buy 16 days worth and you get the rest of the month for free.

Ms BARRY: Minister, thank you very much for your time this morning and thank you to your department for its time, too. Minister, I understand that the development of a comprehensive education campaign for the public preceded the introduction of integrated ticketing in July of this year. Can you please outline for the committee how it was developed, what it entails, how it is being delivered and, importantly, the criteria for gauging its effectiveness?

Mr LUCAS: An extensive and comprehensive public education campaign was developed in recognition of the significant change to public transport with the introduction of TransLink. Our public education campaign incorporated both an awareness raising campaign of the TransLink brand throughout south-east Queensland and the introduction of the one-ticket concept. What used to happen in the old days if you wanted to have integrated ticketing you would nationalise everyone. That went out in Britain in the 1950s and we do not nationalise things anymore. We do what is essentially a little bit harder but more rewarding. We actually work with the private sector to provide those services. So there is a significant education campaign in terms of saying to people, 'This is a private operator. Now it will work in a seamless session with TransLink.' Our objectives included to build an awareness of the TransLink name from 53 per cent of public transport users to at least 80 per cent, to build awareness of integrated ticketing, and to create an understanding that integrated payment based tickets are the start of a more streamlined integrated transport system.

The key messages included: TransLink integrated ticketing is the first stage to improving public transport in south-east Queensland, and the extensive education campaign began in April this year. Additionally, TransLink staff have presented to more than 40 community and business groups and attended 15 regional events with the TransLink information bus. A key tool for the program was the creation of the bus, which is a Brisbane Transport bus renovated as a mobile display that travels around south-east Queensland to promote TransLink and provide information to enhance and understand awareness. More than 1.2 million brochures have been delivered to each household in south-east Queensland and directly to commuters. They deliver information about local operator impacts, fare changes and new tickets. We also employed close to 100 helping hands across the system at major stops, stations and interchanges. They were people there so that when the new system was rolled out they could tell the public how to do things so that they would better understand how it was rolled out.

There was a vigorous two-month advertising campaign. Also, TransLink through the TransInfo information screen—and you can see it on the screen—has also of course been promoted. TransInfo has always been there, but we have integrated it with TransLink to provide better information about how you might use public transport. This is a wonderful benefit to tourists of course, because they can log on and see it, and also to people who think, 'Look, I want to see whether TransLink means something for me in my area. What kinds of services do I have the opportunity of accessing?' It offers you a whole lot of different ways of travelling the way you choose. You might want to catch a ferry or a bus, and it gives you some information about that. I have been delighted with the customer response to the transition to integrated ticketing and the quick take-up of the new travel options. The campaign will be formally measured through the customer focus groups in September and our annual public transport survey, which is held in November.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Minister, and you will table that document?

Mr LUCAS: Yes, I will.

Ms BARRY: Staying with integrated ticketing, will you outline to the committee the opportunity for the public to get involved in the planning for the TransLink network?

Mr LUCAS: Yes, I will. The Beattie government will change the way public transport planning is done in south-east Queensland through the TransLink network plan. I said to you before that there is the availability of additional information as part of TransLink. That will of course inform our decisions in relation to the roll out. But the TransLink network plan will be a 10-year plan and detailed three-year program of improvements to improve public transport infrastructure and services across south-east Queensland. The public will get a chance to review and provide feedback on the very first network plan in August and September 2004. Can I say this about public transport: my personal view is that in the past people in outer urban areas of Brisbane have not got the level of service that they might expect from public transport. They are the real winners I think from TransLink. After having got integrated ticketing in place under TransLink, now our big challenge is to better improve services, particularly in those outer urban areas that ring, if you like, Bribie and Caboolture out to Ipswich and down to Logan, Redlands and those sorts of areas. We have a real opportunity I think to improve services for people in those parts of the world and better integrating them with the public transport system.

The public will get a chance to review and provide feedback on the first network plan in August and September this year. There will be a range of activities to encourage members of the public and key stakeholders to comment on the draft, including a public launch of the draft network plan, a summary of improvements in each area to be sent to households via local newspapers, media releases and advertisements, public displays, workshops, meetings and briefings. I want to say this about the Brisbane City Council: I compliment the Brisbane City Council on the fact that it actually provides significant funds itself in relation to public transport through its subsidy to Brisbane Transport. I know

that the Gold Coast recently announced that it would have a public transport levy. No other councils do. There is a real role for it to be involved in relation to the interests of its ratepayers as well, and we would welcome it to do it. Fundamentally, it is a state government responsibility—and I am not ducking from that—but I would also encourage local authorities to get involved in that respect.

At the present time we are doing a survey. We have done it in Brisbane. We are doing it on the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast at the present time in terms of transport use, whether that be public or private transport—roads, rail, however you get there; how you get point A to point B. That is important information. The TransLink data is important information, and the TransLink network plan is also important in getting a better understanding of how we can service people and use their taxpayer dollars more effectively and how we might improve it in the future.

Ms BARRY: Staying with TransLink, in relation to integrated ticketing and the implementation of service changes to the public transport network, could you please explain to the committee how these service changes have been developed and where it is expected the more significant changes will occur and when?

Mr LUCAS: We are developing the network plan collaboratively with TransLink's business partners, stakeholders, state government agencies, public transport operators and local governments. That builds on the work done by various working groups that we have done in the past. I should say this about Redlands; I mentioned it before. Members of the committee would be horrified to know that National Bus operates in Redlands. What used to happen prior to TransLink was that if you were coming from the Redlands into Brisbane along Old Cleveland Road it could let you off if you were a Redlands resident at, say, Coorparoo. However, if it actually let someone get on the bus at Coorparoo it would get prosecuted. So the bus could be half full, but National Bus was not allowed to pick up people in Brisbane. It reminds you of the old margarine and butter marketing fights we used to have in Australia in the 1960s. What a ridiculous situation where there were taxpayer subsidies to these companies—it was not the operator's fault; it was our fault as a government and governments—yet they could not pick people up but could drop them off. Under TransLink, that has finished now. If a National Bus pulls up at Coorparoo and you want to hop on the bus, you do not have to say, 'I'll wait for a Brisbane Transport one.' You can hop on. Those are the sorts of things we are doing in a more intelligent and sensible manner.

The proposed improvements will be circulated as I indicated, but improvements in the program will focus on making services connect by coordinating services and timetables at key interchanges and destinations; making services fast, frequent and reliable; investing in rail and bus infrastructure to cater for growth; filling the gaps in the network to provide more frequent services, more night and weekend services and extend services to growing suburbs; and making public transport easy, comfortable and safe in providing quality stations and stops. The budget includes \$90.7 million to deliver better public transport across south-east Queensland as well as the significant investment in the Citytrain network as part of our \$900 million program to increase capacity of that network by 2007-08. Already we have started delivering some service enhancements: \$750,000 per annum for the bus network in Ipswich to provide more frequent services, more weekend and evening services and more services at the start and end of weekday timetables to make it easier to get to work; \$500,000 per annum on the Gold Coast to deliver the new bus service to link Griffith University at Southport with surrounding services, and that has already commenced; and \$500,000 per annum on the Sunshine Coast to improve on-time running and create new routes, including the new service linking the Sunshine Coast University to Caloundra, and that started on 19 July, which was yesterday. We are now finalising improvement plans for other service enhancements as part of the network plan. The proposed service improvements represent additional state funding of \$60 million over the next three years, so it is not to be sneezed at.

The CHAIR: Miss Simpson has one question before we finish this part.

Miss SIMPSON: Minister, I want to go back to the drug impairment assessment. Could you please clarify the answer to the previous question? Can you confirm that no trial of drug impairment assessment as recommended by Travelsafe in 1999 has been conducted?

Mr LUCAS: No. We have not conducted a trial of drug testing, because that is being done by the Victorians at the present time and we are looking to evaluate the effectiveness of that. That is common in relation to transport issues throughout Australia. For example, we were the ones who did the groundbreaking work in chain of responsibility legislation when it comes to heavy transport. Other states looked at our experience and then at a national level they have now adopted it. In relation to drug-driving, we are looking at what Victoria is doing. There is no point if the system does not work appropriately in actually adopting it at the beginning. We want to ensure that it works effectively. But as Tony Kursius indicated before, there are limitations when it comes to the issue of drug-driving that make it really quite difficult for us to deal with. First of all of course, the police have the right to take a blood sample from people. They will often do that in serious accidents to have that opportunity to actually see what is happening. But there are a whole number of drugs, for example—legal and illegal—that impact upon people's driving or otherwise, and they impact upon different people differently and impact upon people depending on what else they have taken.

It might be that I could take drug A legally under prescription and you could take drug A as well, but let us say that I have also taken some other drug as well legally for a condition. Now, that might impair my driving. It is very difficult to legislatively arrive at a solution in relation to drugs. All alcohol testing tests one substance—alcohol. That is all it does. The reason that it does that is that alcohol is the most commonly abused drug when it comes to people who drive. There is not much point in giving people some confidence in the fact or saying to people, 'We've got a drug-driving system that only picks up a couple of drugs or isn't adequately able to deal with the issue of prescription drugs and drugs affecting with each other.' Those are major issues that we have to deal with as well. So we are examining what the Victorian experience is. We want to ensure that we adopt good policy, not policy on the run. You would be pleased to know, because I know that you have an interest in speed cameras, that that anti drug-driving policy development is funded in part from speed camera revenue.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, the safety of young inexperienced drivers on Queensland roads has been of particular interest in recent months. I note on page 1-21 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements that implementation of the Travelsafe Committee's recommendations is a future priority. Can you please outline the activities and programs the Beattie government is introducing to educate young Queensland drivers?

Mr LUCAS: I can. Current data indicates that young novice drivers in Queensland are a high risk group that is overrepresented in crashes, both as a proportion of the population and in the amount of time they spend driving. The Beattie government is concerned about the overrepresentation of young drivers in the road toll. For every 100,000 young adults in Queensland, approximately 20 die in a road crash. This is almost three times higher than the average Queenslanders and is higher still for young adult road users in rural areas. Of the 310 people who died on the state's roads last year, 80 were aged between 17 and 24. I think we can actually have a look at personal experience. It may be different with women, because women are inherently more sensible than men. But certainly when I was that age you did not have the level of awareness of the consequences of your lack of experience with motor vehicles and of foolish behaviour.

We already have a range of strategies which target young drivers, such as public education campaigns, a graduated licensing system and mentoring programs. However, we are always open to new ways to save lives. The Travelsafe Committee held two inquiries and we responded to those reports on 22 March 2004. We supported, either fully or partially, 31 of the committee's 33 recommendations. Currently, we are progressing the formulation of a working group to be comprised of key industry representatives to establish a research program for driver/rider education, and we are developing a survey to measure levels of supervised experience and learner driver attitudes to road safety. For young drivers, we are hoping to have 120 hours of supervised driving experience prior to the securing of a licence.

There is a logbook in the back of the publication—for want of a better word—that is available to young drivers. Someone suggested recently that we should examine making completion of that logbook compulsory. Currently, we are undertaking a project to examine compliance with that logbook. If I am not satisfied that compliance, as a result of that survey, has been adequate then I will seriously look at legislation which makes people complete that logbook. It is a very handy tool. I would think that parents would want to see it, too. Frankly, if you are a parent and the logbook is available, you should be saying to your kids—well, maybe you would be supervising a lot of the time, but you should be talking to them about the logbook.

As an aside, did you know that Gough Whitlam, who was a navigator in the RAAF in World War II, still carries his logbook whenever he goes on a plane flight these days and fills it out, even though he is a passenger?

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr LUCAS: I have not finished yet. Might I have an extension? I won't talk about Gough Whitlam anymore.

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr LUCAS: We are developing a trial for the reintroduction of L-plates for learner drivers. The evaluation of this trial will also inform us as to a decision on the reintroduction of P-plates for provisional licence holders. We are developing an information kit for newly licensed provisional licence holders between 17 and 18 which will include a DVD. I don't want to talk about that too much because we are about to launch it—we will launch it later this year—but it is very, very hard-hitting and very appropriate for young people. They do not want old people like us lecturing them about what will happen if they do not pay attention to the road rules or if they drink-drive, etc. It needs to be brought home to them in peer terms. All of us know of tragic, horrible stories of road trauma and its effect on young people.

We are very keen to educate children about the importance of road safety from the time they start school. We are leading an important initiative called the School Road Safety Education Project, which involves the creation of a comprehensive range of teaching aids, student activities and lesson plans to be incorporated into the entire school curriculum for students from preschool to year 10. Strategies for

improving the road safety behaviour of year 11 and 12 students will also be addressed. We will design these activities to be downloaded via QT's web site. The material will be trialled in 20 primary schools and 20 secondary schools in July and August this year. This will ensure that the curriculum is well-tested before it is available for widespread use. We take that very seriously.

There has been some discussion about the issue of curfews. This government has indicated that we do not support curfews for young drivers. There are a number of reasons for that. First of all, there has to be some empirical evidence in relation to the time that road accidents happen in relation to young people. If I am asked another question, I will deal with that. Young people often work at McDonald's or do night packing and we do not want to exclude them from very legitimate occupations; we want to encourage them to get out there and work. Frankly, young people who work at Kentucky Fried Chicken at night are not really the ones who are likely to have an accident; it is the ones who have nothing to do.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, and advisers. We will now adjourn for a break and we will resume at 10.15.

Sitting suspended from 10.02 a.m. to 10.16 a.m.

The CHAIR: Estimates Committee D has now resumed. The question before the committee is—
That the proposed expenditure for the Department of Transport be agreed to.

Did you want to make a comment, Minister?

Mr LUCAS: Yes, there is one correction. I said before that with the rail upgrading between Townsville and Cairns, the tilt trains could reach speeds of up to 100 kilometres an hour. I was corrected to say that it was 80 kilometres an hour but, in fact, I was right and it is 100.

The CHAIR: Thank you for that information, Minister. I call upon the opposition member, Miss Simpson.

Miss SIMPSON: I refer to non-government question on notice No. 4 in which you were requested to provide this committee with details of the funding allocations for the programs funded from speed camera revenue. Minister, you have failed to provide a breakdown of the funding allocations as requested. Will you now take this question on notice and provide the detailed information that the committee has requested?

Mr LUCAS: I am getting that information at the present time. Speed cameras were introduced in May 1997 and put onto local government roads in June 1999. As at May 2004, we have 2,728 active speed camera sites. The transport legislation provides a detailed prescription for where those moneys may be spent. I remember inserting a provision in it when you guys were last in government and Vaughan Johnson got a bit cranky. I will just get the section of the act for you.

In 2004-05 we have \$30 million, including revenue, from camera detected offences for road safety actions. That total is comprised of \$20.6 million in divisional activity and \$9.4 million for road safety activity carried out across each of the four departmental regions. There is an allocation of camera detected offences revenue of \$5.6 million to the speed camera program and \$15.5 million to road safety, education and awareness programs. Transport safety contributes directly to road safety. Much of the broader work carried out by the Land, Transport and Safety Division, including compliance management and intelligent transport systems work, has a mixture of road safety and economic efficiency outcomes. As such, a proportion of the cost of these activities is considered a road safety outcome. The Auditor-General, of course, conducts a review of the revenue from camera detected offences and the nature of that expenditure.

In 2004-05, \$4.8 million will be allocated for administrative and operational costs associated with the management and implementation of speed activities. We have already been allocated \$10 million for transport and road safety priorities. Can I have a short extension?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Miss SIMPSON: Also, would you be able to table that document?

Mr LUCAS: I will give consideration to what further information we can provide. The major speed management activities for 2004-05 include a review of speed management strategy enforcement, review of new speed enforcement technologies such as fixed cameras and distance over time, continued monitoring of the 50 kilometres an hour local street speed limits, development of a statewide database for speed limits.

Finally, I will say two things about speed cameras. I don't have any shortage of people coming up to me in my electorate who want speed cameras at all sorts of locations. Many are not feasible, due to the construction of the road or the traffic volumes. Having said that, it is important that we gain the maximum of public confidence in speed cameras; that they are not there to collect revenue. I would be delighted if we got zero money from speed cameras because nobody was speeding. The aim of the exercise is for people not to speed. I am wanting to look more at how we can demonstrate to people that there is a definite benefit from—

Miss SIMPSON: If you would table that document to show where the money is being allocated, that would help.

Mr LUCAS: I want to look more directly at how we can establish a direct benefit from money that is raised from speed cameras and perhaps direct it specifically to black spots and the like. I think that is an important aspect of getting and maintaining public confidence in the speed camera system.

Miss SIMPSON: Minister—

Mr LUCAS: Yes, we can do that.

Miss SIMPSON: I refer you to the implementation of stage one of the TransLink integrated ticketing system referred to in Future Developments of public transport at MPS 1-32. I note that a paper based ticket replaces the south-east explorer integrated ticket introduced in 1998, which permitted multimodal travel all day from Noosa in the north to Coolangatta in the south and west to Helidon for \$21.60. Can you confirm that the cost for similar travel under TransLink is \$32.80 per ticket, and will you please consider a special tourist package to replace the south-east explorer ticket?

Mr LUCAS: Firstly, I will ask Mick McShea to identify himself and give a quick explanation of that and then I will talk about some of the tourist benefits of TransLink.

Mr McShea: Mick McShea, General Manager of TransLink. It is true that the south-east explorer ticket is no longer in existence. However, the south-east explorer did not go over 18 operators, as we have now. In addition, with a daily ticket you can now nominate which zones you want to use. If you don't want to travel through all 23 zones, you can get a daily ticket for much less than the south-east explorer.

Mr LUCAS: The point is this: with the south-east explorer, if you wanted a day rove over the entirety of the network, it was Brisbane Transport and Queensland Rail only, wasn't it?

Mr McSHEA: Yes.

Mr LUCAS: That does nothing for people in those—

Mr McSHEA: And a number of other operators.

Mr LUCAS: Sorry, and a number of other operators. We will get the details of those other operators. In a sense, you had to pay for the big kahuna to get all of the benefits of the system. Now, if you buy a daily ticket—just a daily ticket—and you are staying on holidays at Manly, enjoying the beautiful bayside, then you can roam over the network between the zone that Manly is in and the city for the price of a daily return ticket. That is a massive benefit. TransLink is a big win for tourists because it means that they do not have to worry about individual operators. The Internet site is a big win. This is a very simple network. You can get this leaflet and see what the costings are. In the past, how would a tourist know how much a National bus costs in Redlands, or a Clarks bus costs in Logan, or a Hornibrook bus costs somewhere else. There were all sorts of scales and fares. This will be a major benefit to tourism generally and in the regions, because you can now understand very quickly how much it costs to duck up the Sunshine Coast from Brisbane, and back again. Far from being a problem for tourism, I think it is a major benefit.

Miss SIMPSON: Minister, in regard to page 115 of the Capital Statement, I refer to the estimated cost of \$140 million allocated to the building of the tunnel to connect the Queen Street bus station and the Roma Street extension of the inner northern busway and ask: what has been the impact of the inner northern busway on bus travel time between Queen Street and the Royal Brisbane Hospital?

Mr LUCAS: In relation to the alteration of travel times over the current inner northern busway, I will provide you with some information in relation to that. We are currently evaluating that and I am not sure if the evaluation is available yet. I will certainly respond to the committee, so I will take that question on notice. The inner northern busway really does offer the opportunity to make our bus network more and more accessible to people. Also, I would like to thank the Brisbane City Council and the Lord Mayor for his expression of willingness to work with the state government when it comes to the inner northern busway. He has indicated that he is happy for the busway to go through the King George Square car park. We would like him to contribute a bit more and we will see how negotiations go with him. Certainly that is a major incentive in terms of the attractiveness of that project.

There is a slide there—and it is a bit busy, as they say—but you will see that there is a real opportunity to link those parts of the project. Essentially, that will mean that there are dedicated bus lanes from the south side or the South East Freeway almost into the city. Of course, the north side is very important too. We think it will reduce travel times from the inner northern busway at Countess Street to the city centre by seven to nine minutes, and up to 20 minutes on congested days. There will be a King George station as well, which will help remove congestion from the Queen Street bus station, and a U-turn facility providing flexibility to bus operators. \$140 million over three years has been allocated.

This is a major project. We will also construct a station at the Royal Children's Hospital. That will be useful for people who want to travel to the exhibition. Now it will be not only a train ride to the

exhibition—which I always enjoy—but also a bus trip. Of course, we have the other one up at the Normanby, which will benefit not only local residents but also school students in that vicinity. The more that is rolled out, the better the advantages. We are currently assessing those changes. In conjunction with this, we are also looking at how we might improve bus priority measures as a result of the inner northern busway.

Miss SIMPSON: I want to return to a rail question and it relates to the document that you tabled outlining the Smart State Building Fund additional capital funding for this budget and in particular to the footnote that refers to the implementation of reforms identified as part of the Queensland Rail strategic assessment and that funding is going to be flowing from the implementation of these reforms. Could you outline what reforms these are and how much money you are going to be taking back by some rationalisation of the service?

Mr LUCAS: I will call on Bob Scheuber from Queensland Rail.

Mr Scheuber: With the introduction of competition in 1995, QR and all its sectors involved is facing competition. As the minister said before, both in terms of the two capacities that I have—above rail and below rail—we are looking at all of the areas that QR has, looking at how we can improve the efficiency of our services, and looking at our freight rate structure to see if that is appropriate in the marketplace. Some of the reforms that are being considered impact on both the rail infrastructure—the below-rail part—and also the provision of services through freight reforms. We are very sensitive to the impact that those things have on the community, so there is a need to work through those changes very, very carefully. It is a very considered process that we go through in trying to balance the needs of QR in terms of reform and the impact that that has on the community that QR provides services to.

Miss SIMPSON: Further to that, could you outline what those reforms are and how much those reforms are estimated to recoup?

Mr LUCAS: We are currently working through the nature of the reform process, but I will give you some examples. Currently, QRX is a major customer of Queensland Rail's non-bulk freight up the coast of Queensland and to various other locations. They are owned by Pacific National. As of later this year or early next year, Pacific National will commence operating their own trains on the Queensland Rail network. There is nothing that we can do to stop them doing that; that is part of national competition policy. We have no ability to stop them doing that. One of the things that we will be doing is introducing disciplined train operations, which now means that rather than trains operating at any old time there will be a far more rigorous delivery of those freight train services in a manner that is efficient and appropriate. We cannot run empty trains because Pacific National want to use their own rail fleet.

QRX is about 55 per cent of QR's haul. We make significant losses on our non-bulk freight business and that is in relation to making that service available. So we need to do that more efficiently and effectively. This is about understanding that we are the only complete government owned railway left in Australia and we want to continue to do that, but we need to be effective and competitive in relation to that.

Miss SIMPSON: So how much do you estimate that the reforms are going to recoup?

Mr LUCAS: That is a matter of negotiation and the nature of the competitive impact that we will experience when Pacific National come out there—

Miss SIMPSON: You must have a ballpark figure, though.

Mr LUCAS: We are not here about ballpark figures; it is a matter of our looking at that in the light of the competitive pressures that we are under. What happens in other states is that they just pull up whole rail networks. They are not actually committed to the importance of rural and regional rail services. I know that some people, for example, are critical of why we have a subsidy for the Cairns tilt train and things like that. We have a subsidy for that because people in regional Queensland are entitled to expect a reasonable level of service from their government for their rail network. We are committed to doing things in the south-east corner when it comes to the subsidy that we give to passenger rail services. People think in terms of the tilt train and that it is competing against aeroplanes from Brisbane. That is not what the Cairns tilt train does. An amazing proportion of people hop on part of the way where there is no competitive air fares. They might go from Townsville to Cairns.

Miss SIMPSON: I draw you back to my question because you are not answering it. That is not answering the question that I put to you.

The CHAIR: Do not interject.

Miss SIMPSON: What were the costs that you were hoping to recoup from the reforms?

Mr LUCAS: I answered that.

The CHAIR: I remind the member for Maroochydore to not interject. Let the minister continue.

Mr LUCAS: I have finished.

Miss SIMPSON: I note that the minister did not answer that question. I put a question to the minister in regard to the 'Maritime Safety' output. On page 1-26 reference is made to the recent achievement of having initiated a comprehensive education program to inform the marine community about their obligations regarding ship-sourced sewage. Given the commencement of new legislation that applied from 1 July 2004, can you inform the committee what changes have taken place within the houseboat hire industry in relation to the disposal of ship-sourced sewage in areas such as the Gold Coast waterways, Moreton Bay, the Sunshine Coast and Hervey Bay in particular? In particular, will the minister advise the committee whether these vessels and their operations comply with the legislation?

Mr LUCAS: I call on Captain John Watkinson.

Capt. Watkinson: I think that the issue was referring to the commercial houseboat areas.

Miss SIMPSON: Yes, it was.

Capt. Watkinson: In Moreton Bay, I think you said—

Miss SIMPSON: Moreton Bay, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and Hervey Bay in particular.

Capt. Watkinson: In terms of the issues in Moreton Bay and the Gold Coast, the commercial houseboat hire companies have in most cases complied with the legislation prior to the legislation coming in on 1 July. In terms of Hervey Bay, I am not too sure of the number of houseboats even in Hervey Bay. I think that you might possibly be referring to the whale-watching boats up there—maybe I am wrong. There is quite a significant fleet of whale-watching vessels. Again, in terms of compliance with the legislation, they would all comply. The legislation regarding those vessels is fairly flexible in that area. The ones that would not comply have been given an indication that if they take their required steps, that is, if they have an order form, if they have a plan, to put a system in, we have given that undertaking that they would not be subjected to any legislative or breaching arrangements for those particular vessels. The detail in terms of the other areas other than a general acceptance of the legislation, I really cannot answer.

Mr LUCAS: Can I add as well that it is simply not acceptable any more to discharge—could I have an extension?

Miss SIMPSON: Yes.

Mr LUCAS:—to discharge sewage effluent into our waterways. The very people who are the beneficiaries from the wonderful ecotourism that our pristine waterways have also have a very strong commercial interest in making sure that their sewage is treated on board or dealt with appropriately. So this is about improving our environment and it is something that is not unreasonable. We who live on the land would not tolerate our next door neighbours emptying the nightsoil bin out the backyard. This is no different. In fact, in the marine environment it goes a lot further. So this is about encouraging people to understand the importance of marine pollution. There are certain areas where we have different discharge requirements. It depends upon the area. In certain rivers, creeks or designated smooth waters, you cannot discharge untreated sewage at all. It depends on the nature of the area and the nature of the treatment that you have.

The CHAIR: The time allocated for questions from non-government members has expired.

Mr O'BRIEN: I note on page 1-19 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements that a review of the driver safety and education strategy has started as part of the road safety initiatives package. What work is being conducted to improve the competency and safety of Queensland drivers as part of this project?

Mr LUCAS: Road trauma is one of Queensland's most significant public health issues. During the last decade over three and a half thousand Queenslanders died and 46,000 were seriously injured in road crashes. These cost Queenslanders in excess of \$1 billion each year. The driver and safety education strategy review is a three-pronged approach aimed at deterring illegal and dangerous road-user behaviour in Queensland. The components include the penalties and sanctions review, the impaired driving legislation review and behavioural and education safety initiatives. The aim of the penalties and sanctions review is to ensure that penalties and sanctions match the seriousness of offences in order to enhance their deterrent effect.

The review is being implemented by a phased approach. The review has led to tougher penalties for hand-held mobile phone use whilst driving and tougher fines for speeding, including a six-month suspension for motorists caught driving more than 40 kilometres an hour over the speed limit. The next round of offences being reviewed is scheduled for government consideration this year.

The impaired driving legislation review will include a review of penalties and sanctions relating to impaired driving offences including drink-driving and drug-driving. The overall aim of the review is to reduce the Queensland road toll and alcohol and drug related trauma. In 2003, alcohol or drug use contributed to 111 fatalities on Queensland roads.

Further QT research has shown that one in 10 drivers get behind the wheel whilst under the influence of alcohol. The extensive review of drink-driving is looking at a wide range of initiatives to reduce drink-driving and alcohol related crashes on our roads. Initiatives being considered include

mandatory rehabilitation programs for repeat offenders and breath alcohol ignition interlock devices. We could not get by without a gadget, so I will show you that in a second.

The review will also include research into the practices of other jurisdictions. The ILDR recommendations are expected to be finalised by July-August 2006. A series of research projects aimed at developing interventions for reducing the road toll is also being conducted as part of the behavioural and education and safety initiatives.

QT is also funding research projects that include a culture of drug taking in the heavy vehicle industry, the recent rise in motor bike crashes in Queensland, collaborating with the universities on rural road safety and youth risk-taking projects. The review is a multiyear project due to the enormity of the areas that it is focusing on. If we could just show the interlock device.

Mr Kursius: This is really just a demonstration version, but that is what the particular item looks like. There is a mouthpiece. This could well be mounted on a dashboard, or whatever. It is activated and the ignition is turned on. One light will come on. The driver will blow into this until the signal stops and it will read whether or not that person is above or below. If they are below the legal limit they can then—

The CHAIR: Time has expired.

Mr O'BRIEN: I note from page 1-21 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements that you refer to the development of a high productivity vehicle policy. How is Queensland Transport addressing the need for high productivity vehicles to efficiently carry the state's rapidly increasing freight task?

Mr LUCAS: That is an important question considering that our annual tonne kilometre task by road is projected to grow by 96 per cent to 87 billion tonne kilometres by 2011-12. The efficient transport of goods is vital to the state's economy. Increasingly we need to look at road freight transport efficiency in avenues such as freight efficient vehicles. QT and Main Roads have been key contributors to the development of performance based standards for heavy vehicles.

In the past people would say, 'These are the dimensions, this is the weight and this is the length,' but the design might make a major difference to how the vehicle performs. We want to encourage people to have vehicles that are more efficient in how they operate. The more you can actually transport in a given vehicle without increasing axle loads, the more effective it is.

We have significant experience in computer simulation of vehicle testing. We validate that work by on-road vehicle testing. The value of the PBS system is that it defines how vehicles are required to perform, as opposed to the traditional prescriptive approach. In other words, our new system says, 'The vehicle at 80 kilometres an hour will do this and it will need this much road,' as distinct from saying, 'It has to be X metres long or have these axles in these locations.' That, ultimately, is not the main point. The main point is how it performs.

We have been the recognised leader of Australian jurisdictions on vehicle standards issues, including computer modelling of vehicle dynamics and in-field testing of innovative vehicle combinations, and have performed a pivotal role in the development of the PBS concept. We play an extremely important role in this work through the development of those combinations. Examples of multicombinations with several trailers are B-triples, AAB-quads, BAB-quads, B-quads and the ICON. These innovative multicomcombination examples use a variety of innovative axle configurations and trailer attachment mechanisms and have between three and six trailers. We are not talking about putting these down local roads. We are talking about them on appropriate freight roads.

QT is also continuing its chain of responsibility agenda. Chain of responsibility legislation applies to all people involved in the operation of heavy vehicles, from owners to managers, loaders and supervisors. We make no apology for taking a tough line on transport companies, retailers and anyone else who forces truckies to drive unreasonable hours and break the law. We are at the forefront of the national fight against road transport operators. We have now successfully prosecuted 361 responsible persons, of whom 157 were influencing persons. So it is not just saying to a truck driver, 'If you break the law we are going to be after you.' It is saying to transport companies and retailers, 'If you are going to make a truckie break the law then we will be after you as well.' If you do not prosecute along the chain of responsibility then truckies will continually do more and more to cut their throat and the honest, decent operators, who are the vast majority, will then be at a competitive disadvantage. So we want to make everyone understand that they have a role in relation to that. In two headline cases, Harkers and Market Drive, the fines were \$40,000 and \$20,000 respectively. There are 51 chain of responsibility investigations awaiting adjudication by QT that may proceed before the courts.

The CHAIR: You will table the slide that you are displaying?

Mr LUCAS: Yes.

Mrs SMITH: Page 1-33 of the MPS indicates that in excess of 18,000 driver authorisation renewals will be processed in the next year. Can you please outline what steps have been taken by the Beattie government to ensure that authorised public transport drivers pose no threat to children and the community?

Mr LUCAS: The Beattie government places child safety at the top of our priorities. Tough new measures have been introduced to prevent people convicted of child sex related offences from driving or operating public passenger buses and taxis. I thank the opposition for its cooperation with the legislation when we introduced it.

Legislation introduced in parliament on 13 May ensures that people who have been convicted of child related sex offences can never be issued with driver authorisation to drive a public passenger vehicle in Queensland. There are no appeal provisions against this decision, and these people are banned for life. These offences have been classified as category A driver disqualifying offences. We do not want a repeat of the situation where a magistrate overturned a QT refusal to grant a bus licence authorisation to a twice-convicted paedophile. The protection of children and other vulnerable members of society is now a paramount principle in considering whether to grant or renew driver authorisation. If that principle cannot be satisfied then an authority will not be issued.

A special project team has been formed to establish stronger operational procedures and processes underpinning the new legislation. The legislation is retrospective and QT has been working with the Queensland Police Service to identify any existing driver authorisation holders who have been convicted of category A disqualifying offences. We have reviewed criminal history data and identified 38 current drivers with category A offences. Letters have been sent notifying the drivers that they are ineligible to hold DA and their DA licence has been cancelled. There is no appeal against this decision. The legislation has also been strengthened to require those who have either a charge or a conviction for other serious offences—category B driver disqualifying offences—to provide exceptional reasons. There is a further category C.

All public transport drivers are already subject to a six-monthly criminal history check, and this will continue. That criminal history check will include a wide range of serious offences as well as a number of drugs, firearms and dishonesty offences. So it is not just about child sex offences; there is a broader variety.

We have met regularly with QPS since the new legislation was introduced to consider ways of strengthening the data matching process. These include verifying search parameters on names and dates of birth. I make no apology for being tough on this. Additionally, we provide operators—we are talking about bus drivers here—with the ability, through a web site that we make available to them, to input the driver authorisation number of a particular individual to confirm that that person is authorised. That is an added protection so that accredited operators can make sure that the people who are driving have the appropriate authorisation.

Mrs SMITH: Thank you, Minister. During the last election, the Beattie government committed additional funding to passenger transport services in the regions. Can you please outline what improvements to services will take place and how a flexible transport service is being trialled to get the best results for the community?

Mr LUCAS: We are spending an extra \$8.25 million over the next three years. We are increasing our commitment to urban services in regional areas from \$2 million to \$3 million a year. Service improvements are intended for Cairns, Townsville and Wide Bay. Our aim is to grow usage of public transport in major regional centres to provide access to major employment, shopping and recreational facilities for new subdivisions, bring the standard of service in major centres to a minimum hourly frequency, seek alternatives to building more roads and bring the level of usage in line with that in south-east Queensland.

We do not have enough use of public transport. Increased investment in urban bus routes will ensure more efficient transport for Queenslanders living in regional centres. Ridership in Brisbane city is greater than 50 trips each year. In Cairns it is about 20 trips each year and in other centres it is less than 10 each year. We need to significantly increase that ridership in regional Queensland and we need to do that through increased flexibility.

We also need to look at better using existing transport systems by coordinating customised services in low-demand areas. We already have trials under way in Mackay and Mount Tamborine, and we are going to start trials in Toowoomba, Hervey Bay, Townsville and Ipswich. This provides better value for money outcomes for the government and the community.

To give you an example, flexible transport has been in operation in Mackay for over 10 years. Mackay Taxi Transit provides demand responsive, door-to-door pick-ups on an hourly basis to and from Mackay. We currently provide \$120,000 a year to assist Mackay Taxis in providing this service. Similarly, in Mount Tamborine there used to be a bus service that was sort of supported by school transport. We opened a school there that destroyed the business case for the bus service, so we are currently piloting a multiride service connecting up with Beenleigh station.

In a sense you can do a little better for the taxi industry in giving it extra dollars in terms of multiple use of vehicles. That is good for them. It is good for the community and it can reduce the level of empty buses running around. I think the average bus use was 1.4 passengers per trip. That is not real good in that particular area. Now, for a cab we have an average of about two and a half passengers. That is a far

more efficient way of doing it. We need to think more laterally about how we are providing public transport, because it is not just about the traditional way of doing things.

Mrs SMITH: Page 1-21 of the MPS indicates that a number of on-line activities are being developed for use by Queensland Transport customers. What services will be available and how will this improve the efficiency of QT operations?

Mr LUCAS: In excess of 13.5 million transactions are processed annually and approximately 110,000 driver licence tests are conducted. In the last six months, QT's main call centre received 6,000 calls per day. The booking system call centre received 1,000 calls a day and processed 750 bookings per day. Regional client service delivery includes vehicle and vessel registration and licensing business and a number of transaction services provided through a QT managed network. This network includes 53 customer service centres and nine QT-led QGAP offices.

We have developed a strategy to determine the best way to meet the growing customer demands. We have been playing a key role in whole-of-government initiatives for providing electronic access to a wide range of services via the Internet. The Customer On-Line project is about changing the mix and balance of the customer service delivery network with a transfer of high-volume transactions from face to face to efficient, low-cost electronic self-serve. There are a number of transactions for which people must go to a QT centre, such as renewing a driver's licence. There are many for which they do not. This is about making that available. The member for Cook has people throughout a very diverse electorate. It is not convenient for a lot of his constituents to get into a QGAP office or a Queensland Transport office. The more we can provide services to them on line, the better it is for them. The electorates of Aspley and Lytton are really quite small. People can duck down the road and do something. This is about understanding that people in places such as the electorate of Cook deserve some better services.

We originally offered three web based services: registration renewal, driver licence test bookings and vehicle inspection bookings. From 1 July 2004 three new services were introduced: change of address, replacement vehicle registration label and replacement vehicle registration certificate. We process 960,000 change-of-address transactions per year and provide 118,000 replacement labels. If we predict a take-up of 10 per cent to 20 per cent of these transactions, that will relieve pressure on our customer service network and call centre. Eighty-five customers used these transactions on the first day. Certainly it is of big benefit. Later this year we are looking at rolling out payment of camera detected offence notices and purchase of publications and at improvements to existing forms download to make the list more expansive and user friendly.

Ms BARRY: Minister, pages 1-30 and 1-31 of the MPS include a number of examples of the Beattie government's commitment to providing quality passenger transport services around Queensland. You have spoken today about service enhancement for regional Queensland and flexible transport trials. Can you please outline to the committee what steps the government is taking to ensure the safety of these bus services and a high level of service?

Mr LUCAS: We are serious about the safety and reliability of the services bus fleets provide the public. The safety and quality of public transport services in Queensland are provided for through a combination of accreditation and enforcement while in operation. A system of quality control and sanctions is available under the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act to ensure safe and good-quality services are provided. In addition, operators who hold specific service contracts with the government have additional performance requirements embodied in their contracts.

There are about 1,100 buses operating 10 to 12 hours each day providing regular timetabled bus services in Queensland. Minimum standards for safety, customer service and business knowledge are also provided for. Under contracts outside south-east Queensland, scheduled bus operators must keep a record of any part of their services that fails to operate according to their timetable. Operators must also keep records of those services that operate to a maximum capacity.

QT monitors the service performance of scheduled bus operators on a regular basis. Public transport legislation provides sanctions against operators whose services do not run as per timetables or whose vehicles are not maintained and regularly break down. In the first instance, operators may be issued with a section 100 notice directing them to ensure their vehicles run to the timetable and their vehicles are appropriately maintained. A section 100 notice remains in force for three years. During the currency of a notice, each and every subsequent non-compliance can constitute an offence. We can deal with that by way of a penalty infringement notice of \$300 or a prosecution in the court with a maximum penalty of \$12,000. A court conviction for non-compliance constitutes a disqualifying offence. Under the passenger transport legislation, an operator's accreditation can be suspended or cancelled. Should a contract operator's OA be cancelled or suspended, the operator would not be able to provide any passenger transport services and therefore would be in breach of their contract. As well as the above, TransLink operators have further penalties and sanctions for non-performance of contract conditions.

Actions that are currently in train to improve performance include providing improved guidelines to transport inspectors on the appropriate use of sanctions and penalties, establishing procedures to

identify problem fleets earlier, increased use of section 100 notices and early warning of emerging problems, completion of a compliance review seeking to improve the use of transport inspectors, addressing with industry the issue of vehicles being presented with defects for inspection, and progressing OA reforms to ensure operators complete full OA requirements. I should finish on this point: the safest way for your kids to get to school is on a school bus.

Ms BARRY: Minister, I refer to page 1-15 of the MPS, which states that a number of corridor studies have been undertaken in south-east Queensland and that that activity has been undertaken to protect these corridors. Can you outline the benefits of this process and their importance in meeting population growth in the area?

Mr LUCAS: Yes, I can. Six major transport corridors have been under investigation in south-east Queensland since 1997. You have the CAMCOS corridor, Caboolture to Maroochydore, Caboolture to Landsborough—the honourable member referred to that before—Gowrie to Grandchester, the Gold Coast, Robina to Coolangatta and Petrie to Kippa-Ring. The government committed significant funding to undertake complex and lengthy investigations into these corridors as an investment in the longer term. We have a range of corridor protection activities undertaken for these corridors, including use of section 145 of the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act, setting conditions on IDAS development approvals, ensuring a corridor is included in local government planning schemes, ongoing planning, ensuring continuing compatibility with adjacent developments, land acquisition principally through the use of the departmental hardship policy and defending development application conditions set by local governments in the Planning and Environment Court appeals. Previously transport corridor acquisition funding was \$11.2 million and is \$2 million per annum between 2005-06 and 2006-07.

I am pleased to announce today that we have decided to invest a further \$500,000 to undertake a technical investigation of the future capacity of the interstate rail corridor to the south-west of Brisbane. I do not have a slide of this one, but I will table this for the benefit of the members of the committee. The Queensland government owns the interstate railway corridor that goes out the back of Beaudesert—the standard gauge line for want of a better term. That is a good quality line. It is an area that is growing significantly. There is significant growth going on in the area down to Beaudesert. There is an existing Queensland Rail Beaudesert branch line that is not used except by historical trains. It is on a very old alignment and the track is simply not really where you would want people to go. Additionally, it feeds people into the Gold Coast-Beenleigh rail line, for which capacity is a problem, even though we are doing those upgrades.

What this study is about is conducting the initial examination in relation to the feasibility of adopting this corridor as a suburban rail corridor. Obviously we would need to dual gauge it because the interstate line uses it as well, but this offers the opportunity of working with Terry Mackenroth's Office of Urban Management to develop public transport at the time or take those decisions now that can actually—can I have an extension please?

The CHAIR: You have had an extension.

Mr LUCAS: All right.

The CHAIR: The time allocated for questions by government members has expired.

Mr WELLINGTON: Minister, at page 1-2 of your Ministerial Portfolio Statements you refer to upgrading and improving regional bus services on the Sunshine Coast as a significant activity provided for in this year's budget. What enforcement action will you or your officers take against Sunbus management if they fail to ensure their buses meet scheduled bus timetables? Before answering, I would like to read out a letter I have received from one of my constituents. It is dated 22 June and it states—

I thought I would contact you direct regarding Sunbus as we have usually—

The CHAIR: I remind the member for Nicklin that you are making a statement and this is really not a question.

Mr LUCAS: It is a rhetorical question.

Mr WELLINGTON: Okay. Let me say that there is concern about Sunbus meeting timetables. There is significant money allocated in your Ministerial Portfolio Statements. My question to you is: what action will you take to ensure that they meet the commitments which are expected of them?

Mr LUCAS: I expect the highest standards from our operators, including Sunbus on the Sunshine Coast. If any person or operator does not comply with the particular standards under our legislation, then the person or operator can be directed to comply with that standard by a notice issued under section 100 of the act. An operator accreditation audit was undertaken of Sunbus over two days and was completed on 16 April 2004. The audit was deemed necessary due in part to the need to establish compliance prior to entering into negotiations for the issue of third generation contracts. There is a significant level of concern there. I have received customer complaints before. The honourable member has raised it with me, as I think a number of other members have. Some of the concerns are late

running, failure to pick up passengers, overcrowding on some services and deletion of services from the timetable.

Strategies were developed to address the above concerns. Meetings have been ongoing—in fact, prior to the 16 April meeting earlier this year. There was also an Industrial Relations Commission hearing on 30 January 2004. All strategies identified have either been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. Some have been more effective than others, and where further improvement is required QT is working with Sunbus or is taking corrective action.

To date the current status of customer complaints are late running—the level of customer complaints has reduced considerably—and failure to pick up passengers. There were two complaints we received about that. However, information retrieved from Sunbus's electronic ticketing data advised that the services did run on time. We were able to check these things. As to overcrowding on some services, no further complaints have been received. I turn to the deletion of some services from the timetable. An article in the *Sunshine Coast Daily* on 7 July 2004 claimed that timetables are still not being met. However, there is no evidence that we can see to support this claim. Having said that, if there is some evidence to do that, we are happy to look into it. I will investigate it most seriously.

A section 100 notice of the act was issued, effective 31 May 2004. Following customer complaints, a check on availability of timetables on Friday, 11 June 2004 revealed that Sunbus had yet to distribute fresh stock to the usual outlets or have them available on buses. Following contact with Sunbus, this shortcoming was rectified the following day. Can I just say that I was pretty amazed that they would not have distributed timetables. How is it in their interests to do that? Having said that, with regard to TransLink, we have now distributed the timetables, and I think we distributed 40,000 on the Sunshine Coast or something of that order. So we are now responsible for that. I make no apology for this: if operators do not comply with the requirements of the law, then we will take action in relation to that.

The CHAIR: Would you like the minister to continue?

Mr WELLS: No, I have new questions. That is the answer I want to hear; that you will take action if they do not comply.

Mr LUCAS: Sure. There was something else I wanted to say about it as well.

Mr WELLINGTON: Minister, I refer you to page 1-7 of your Ministerial Portfolio Statements under the heading 'Departmental Financial Summary'. In that I note you refer to a comparison between last year and this year. In particular, I direct your attention to the 'revenue' heading and the line item headed 'own source revenue', where there appears to be an almost doubling of own source revenue estimates on last year. Is this line item referring to all of the increased fees and charges that your department has approved since this time last year? If so, will you provide an itemised comparison between last year and this year of those appropriate fees and charges? I am happy for that question to be taken on notice.

Mr LUCAS: It is almost exclusively TransLink fare revenue or Brisbane City Council contribution towards TransLink or families concessions moneys that we get from the department of families. In the past what would happen with operators—not QR but bus operators, for example—is they would take the fare box risk and we would provide them with a subsidy. Under TransLink they collect the fares and they give them to us. So our revenue, in that sense, increases, but I will provide you with that information, no problem.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you, Minister. Following on from that, I had difficulty in trying to decipher some of the figures in the Ministerial Portfolio Statements. I do not know if you are aware, but at the moment if you want to get a guide of the Queensland road rules you have to pay a fee of \$9.50 or nearly \$10. I do not think it is appropriate. If it is the case that members of parliament chose to photocopy those road rules and distribute them free of charge to their constituents, would you have a problem with that or do you see this as affecting your bottom line and the income that is generated by your department?

Mr LUCAS: I would certainly have no problem with that provided that they were acknowledged as Queensland Rail and provided you did not charge for them and provided you provided them in an appropriate fashion. You would not put something at the front saying 'vote Peter Wellington' or something like that.

I am told that we structure the costs essentially for those sort of things to cover their printing costs. I am not sure to what extent they are available on the Internet and I will examine that for you. But, for example, with general legislation you can buy it from Goprint and pay the fee or you can actually click on the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel web site and access it that way. I think the honourable member makes a good point. I certainly would not have any objection to it. The more people who read the road rules the better.

Mr WELLINGTON: Minister, the last question I have for you on this section is that at page 1-19 of your Ministerial Portfolio Statements you refer to road use management and a review of the department's output performance. What do you consider to be an acceptable time that someone should

have to wait at one of our customer service centres to actually get served? In the past we have asked the question about call centres and what are appropriate and reasonable delays. My question to you is: what do you believe is an appropriate and reasonable time for a delay at our busy customer service centres?

Mr LUCAS: That question is like asking how long is a piece of string in terms of service standards. Let me say this to you: in many instances I think people are waiting too long at customer service centres. I am told that we have a standard which strives to serve customers within 10 minutes. We do monitor the average time through a queuing system called Q-matics. The majority of queuing systems are located within the south-east region, where the highest percentage of face-to-face customers are. Their average wait time for the period July 2003 was 10.31 minutes. This is an increase from the previous year of 42 seconds. That can be attributed to our tougher standards for the introduction of evidence of identity. We require more information for that and it may take a little bit longer.

I very much appreciate that the time people spend waiting at a centre is not productive time for them. I mentioned some of the other initiatives like improving Internet service delivery. I have actually sat behind the counter with my director-general. We had our cultural revolution in Queensland Transport. We went to the Wynnum transport office a couple of months ago. We sat there for a few hours, each of us beside a customer service operator, watching what they do—watching how they interact with the public and watching how systems could be better. I think there is no replacement for doing that. I am pleased to say that there were not undue queues while I was there, but during peak periods necessarily—like in a sandwich bar at lunchtime—we have those problems.

There are various ways that we are addressing that. The first way is in relation to strategies to improve the Internet roll-out of services and to look at how we might reduce duplication. One of the things I have asked my department to look at, for example, is if you need to secure a copy of your birth certificate from the registrar, whether we can assist you to order that from a Queensland Transport office. That is currently under review. These are methods to reduce the things that you do. There are some things that you must attend an office to do, but it is very interesting when you have a look at the registration renewal figures. I would have thought that most of them would have been at Department of Transport offices. That is far from the case. I will get to those statistics in a second. They are very, very interesting because most of them are not renewed at Department of Transport offices. The more that we can encourage people to use alternative methods such as Australia Post and the like the better that we can keep core services there.

Mr WELLINGTON: I have a follow-on question. I do not deny that you are looking at all these other ways of trying to increase the service available to members of the public in Queensland, but the bottom line is that it seems to me in Queensland today people are waiting longer at customer service centres than they did two, three or four years ago. The bottom line is that I believe we need to have more staff in attendance. Are you prepared to make more staff available at customer service centres in addition to all those other strategies that you are talking about because of additional requirements of people to attend customer service centres?

Mr LUCAS: These are important resourcing issues and they are issues which we consider in an overall budgetary context. In relation to payment options for registration, 22 per cent is by BPay, 35 per cent is through Australia Post, nine per cent is by mail, 27 per cent is through our customer service centres, six per cent is credit card by phone and one per cent is by EPay. I would have thought most people would have posted them or would have gone to a Department of Transport office. Clearly that is not the case. If you are going to have given dollars for a transport purpose, if you can actually improve efficiency by diverting unneeded visits, then you can keep the same number of staff doing the great job that they do and maybe divert those monies to other things like better roll-out of bus services. It is a balancing act. We constantly review our service levels and that is something that I am acutely aware of. I do not like people waiting in queues, but I cannot guarantee that at any time of the day you would not have to queue, because if I did that that would mean that we would have enormous numbers of people there and there are other budgetary commitments that we have.

Dr FLEGG: Minister, as you would be aware, there are large rental car fleets operating in Queensland. In Victoria they have a regional system of registration. I understand you can register a vehicle in regional Victoria for about \$400 that would cost around \$1,000 in Queensland and then those vehicles operate in Queensland. Eurocar apparently use this method. Can you detail for us how much revenue is being lost to Queensland because of this practice and what you propose to do about it?

Mr LUCAS: Please rest assured that every time I go to an airport and I go through the rental car area I am acutely looking at seeing how many interstate number plates are there. That is not to say that we do not have interstate vehicles that you will see in a rental place from time to time. That is because people hire cars and drive interstate. We are never going to completely eliminate interstate vehicles being there. We conduct compliance checks of vehicles. I might get Tony Kursius to provide a bit more information, but if the honourable member's concern is interstate vehicles avoiding Queensland registration please rest assured I am very much aware of making sure that we do not let that become an

issue, because they should be paying their full dump. I will get Tony to talk about some of the monitoring we are doing.

Mr Kursius: There are regular audits conducted of the car hire industry and the individual companies. Discussions are held with the industry in terms of those vehicles that are predominantly operating out of Queensland being registered in Queensland. We are happy to receive any sorts of complaints from people about both the car hire industry or any vehicle for that matter with an interstate registration which is actually garaged in Queensland. The garaging is the prominent issue that we would look at—where is the vehicle garaged. If it is garaged in Queensland it should be registered in Queensland. Our enforcement officers continue to monitor that.

Mr LUCAS: In other words, we do not tolerate vehicles that ought to be registered in Queensland not being registered in Queensland. You raised a specific operator there; I will get that particularly looked at. But, as I said to you, I have got a bit of a burning view on this as well, as clearly you do have, member for Moggill, and quite seriously I do have a bit of a look when I am at an airport to make sure that no-one is ripping off the Queensland taxpayer and the Queensland motorist by not paying their full dump.

In some of those regional areas, they are not just big companies we are talking about operating here. Small local businesses might have one or two cars; they cannot register it in another state, they have got to register it in Queensland. We do not want other smart alecs ripping their business case off by not paying their full dump for registration in Queensland. Please rest assured that we monitor it at the moment and we will continue to do so.

Dr FLEGG: In relation to TransLink we have had some complaints, particularly in relation to travel from Robina to Brisbane airport. There are conflicting indications as to what the price should be for that trip and instructions that different prices can be obtained by alighting from the train and buying a second ticket and that Queensland Rail has been told not to issue two tickets where the price is cheaper than the one ticket under TransLink. Can you tell me what it should cost to go from Robina to Brisbane airport?

Mr LUCAS: I will get Mick McShea to fill you in.

Mr McShea: Dr Flegg, you are right. There is a separate arrangement between Airtrain and QR about how their fares are calculated. Under TransLink we have got the facility to issue one ticket that will get you on the rail network through to the airport as part of an integrated system. It is true that if you get off in some instances and buy a rail ticket first and then get to the city and buy a separate ticket there could be a marginal amount of difference of somewhere up to 80c. We have had the same thing, too, but no-one that I am aware of has been instructed not to sell two tickets.

Dr FLEGG: \$1.80.

Mr McShea: From Robina it might be \$1.80. That is one of the glitches of our current system and that is the legacy that we are picking up—the arrangements that Airtrain has with QR—and we will try to encompass that in the system.

Mr LUCAS: Airtrain, as honourable members would be aware, is a private sector operator and therefore it is not subject to the rest of the TransLink operations. It has a contractual position and that is not one that we could easily alter as part of TransLink. Someone might be able to hop off and get a cheaper fare, but I would have thought that if you were catching a train to the airport that you were fairly time sensitive so in the scheme of things there would not be a great saving for you in doing that

Miss SIMPSON: Returning to speed camera revenue and the reporting of the allocation of the speed camera revenue, I refer to the Auditor-General's Report No.4, tabled in December 2002, where a number of recommendations were made about more detailed reporting and performance indicators for speed camera revenue, and I ask: have these recommendations been implemented in full?

Mr LUCAS: Yes.

Miss SIMPSON: Would the minister consider putting the performance indicators, and greater detail as to how they are being implemented, into future budget papers?

Mr LUCAS: I do not control what is in the budget papers. That is really a matter for the Treasurer. However, I am told that we would expect the detailed reporting would be in our annual report this year.

Miss SIMPSON: Those performance indicators and the detailed breakdown on where the spending is? Some of the recommendations here were that there be clear lines as to what was budgeted as per certain line items; not just the total line items but the actual allocation to a specific program, subprogram, then the actuals that were spent. So the budgeted amount, the actuals, the performance indicators that were not previously there, none of that was available in the budget papers or has been provided to this committee. What I would be seeking from you is to make sure that that detailed reporting requirement as recommended by the Auditor-General is actually published.

Mr LUCAS: I do not know if I could be any more clear than my previous answer, which was yes. The procedure for reporting is in relation to the annual report. The Auditor-General, of course, audits the annual report as well. There will be full cooperation from my department with the Auditor-General.

Dr FLEGG: In relation to international licences, and particularly applying to international students, there was a complaint where there was a vehicle accident and the student was on an international licence—I think from Malaysia or in that area—and the student was unable to be traced. The confidentiality laws prevented the address from being obtained. Can you tell us how we can deal with the problem of international licences, whether they are up to driving here if they are here for a long stay?

Mr LUCAS: I will get Tony Kursius to give some specifics and I might answer in general terms.

Mr Kursius: There are a number of countries around the world where we do accept their licences for tourist and student use in Queensland because we regard those countries as having sufficiently high training and licensing arrangements that they match Queensland's high standard. There are other countries that we would not accept that from. If there is a problem in terms of tracing that student's home address then it may be necessary to pursue that back through perhaps their passport arrangements. If there is a particular case we would be happy to try to help in that regard, but in terms of accepting those licences we have confidence that those countries are licensing to that standard. The information provided should be accurate.

Dr FLEGG: How long can they use those licences for?

Mr Kursius: I have to check on the exact time but it is a limited period. If they get permanent residency in Queensland then in fact they actually have to get a Queensland driver's licence.

Mr LUCAS: If in fact they had a Queensland's driver's licence and they went overseas for other reasons not really intending to return, there would not be a lot that we could do. If your concern is that they had an accident and were civilly liable for something, the fact that you are civilly liable for an accident does not relate to your driver's licence either. I could be a hopeless driver and provided I did not break the traffic laws in the accidents that I had nothing is recorded on your driver's licence about that.

As an aside, in relation to overseas drivers—Cairns in particular has a very high proportion of overseas drivers—many of them come from countries where they drive on the opposite side of the road to us and education is very important in terms of making sure that they understand local road rules. In the past we have done work with tourist operators, airlines, et cetera, and there are brochures distributed to explain that information.

The CHAIR: The time allocated for questions by non-government members is expired.

Mrs SMITH: Of particular interest to the residents in the Burleigh electorate is page 16 of the MPS, where it refers to the finalisation of the remaining section of the Robina to Tugun rail extension impact assessment study. Can you outline the benefits of the state government preserving a rail alignment from Robina to Coolangatta?

Mr LUCAS: I can. Transport 2007 identifies the need for a rail extension from Robina to Tugun. In March 2000 we commenced the Robina to Tugun Rail and Road Impact Assessment Study. That study investigates feasibility and development of a Queensland section of rail extension from Robina to Tugun. Parsons Brinkerhoff produced a draft impact assessment study, Part A, from Robina to Stewart Road, Tugun, revised in 2003 following public consultation. The draft IAS confirmed the need for the rail extension and identified the preferred route which is parallel to the road alignment. The study identified locations for three stations—Reedy Creek, Andrews and Elanora. We might just pull that slide up. The draft IAS recommended a staged approach to the development of the corridor—stage 1, enhance existing bus services; and stage 2, progressively develop from Robina to Elanora after 2008. Proposed rail extensions will improve public transport on the Gold Coast and will reduce car dependency in an area marked for high population growth.

The benefits would not be realised if we did not take action to preserve the rail corridor. Part B of the IAS, which is Stewart Road to Coolangatta airport, we were not able to do because that was dependant upon the route that the Tugun bypass would take. We have to go through the environmental hurdles, but now that we have essentially decided the route of the Tugun bypass west of the airport you will see now we can commence work to that part of it there to actually fully identify the corridor.

We have got about a year in terms of our proposals to actually fully finalise the Tugun bypass route—Commonwealth, New South Wales, environmental approvals and the like—and then we can fully define the corridor all the way to Tugun. I am very pleased with the take-up of services on the Gold Coast, as I am sure honourable members would be, and this is about improving that. Think of it what it will do to tourism. When you have a rail link to the Coolangatta airport, it will make it really effective for people to use that as a secondary destination for tourism and that does wonders even more for tourism on the Gold Coast.

Mr O'BRIEN: I refer to page 1-15 of the MPS and ask the minister to outline what the Beattie government is doing to improve public boating facilities across the state over the next three years.

Mr LUCAS: We are committed to expanding and improving public boating facilities for our rapidly growing population of recreational boaters. We have allocated \$20 million from the Smart State Building Fund for new or upgraded public boating facilities. That funding will allow the construction or upgrading of over 90 facilities across the state in the next three years. Smart State funding provides supplements outside the ongoing boating infrastructure capital and maintenance programs fund for public boating facilities.

The major Smart State funded projects in the next three years include \$3.5 million for the dredging strategy at Port Douglas boat harbour. The honourable member would be very happy about that. There is \$2 million for the dredging of Coomera River and the north channel. There is \$937,000 for the refurbishment of the Gold Coast sand bypass jetty at the Southport seaway. There is \$450,000 for the refurbishment of the William Gunn jetty at Manly. There is \$125,000 for a new boat ramp at Pumpkin Creek in Livingstone shire.

The balance of the projects include provision for safety upgrades, long-term dredging strategies, new or upgraded boat ramps. Significant capital projects for 2004-05 under the boating infrastructure capital maintenance program include a dredging strategy at Mooloolaba boat harbour—the honourable member for Maroochy will be happy about that—a new boat ramp at Burrum River near Howard in Hervey Bay city and a new boat ramp at Bells Creek in Caloundra.

Significant planned maintenance work in the BICMP includes maintenance of boat launching facilities and strategic planning of \$1.6 million and dredging of boat harbours and other areas of \$1 million. We are spending almost \$25 million this financial year on recreational boat infrastructure. \$12.9 million will be spent from the BICMP, which I spoke of before. There will be Smart State funding of \$4 million. There will be \$10.58 million for marine safety infrastructure. That is a total of 27 and a half million dollars. To give a comparison, only \$11.4 million was collected from recreational vessel registration fees last year. It will grow a little this year. We spend over twice what we are getting for boating registrations. Some people seem to say, 'We pay all this registration.' In fact there is a taxpayer subsidy of well over half what we receive in boating registrations.

The CHAIR: That concludes the examination of the estimates for the Department of Transport. The committee will suspend for a break. The hearing will resume to examine the proposed expenditure for the Department of Main Roads.

Mr LUCAS: I would like to thank my Queensland Transport officers and GOC officers for their attendance this morning.

The CHAIR: Thank you for your attendance.

Sitting suspended from 11.32 a.m. to 11.46 a.m.

The CHAIR: We will now consider the estimates for the Department of Main Roads. The minister can make some introductory remarks, if he wishes.

Mr LUCAS: With the committees concurrence, I will make some specific comments about Main Roads before taking questions. With me today is my Director-General Steve Golding and General Manager Corporate Services, Danielle Anderson. This year Main Roads has a \$2.3 billion operating budget which includes a \$1.286 billion allocation to manage, plan, construct, maintain and operate Queensland's state controlled road network.

In this budget the Beattie government is continuing its commitment to regional development, jobs and safer roads. Our spending will improve regional roads infrastructure, maintenance and operations and will provide more than 17 and half thousand jobs in road and related industries statewide. Fifty-seven per cent of the regional roadworks program will be spent outside the south-east.

Our roads are an increasingly important issue in Australia's fastest growing state. Our population is forecast to outgrow Victoria's by 2029. This enormous growth places tremendous strain on our existing roads and the need to build more. The Queensland government, through the 2004-05 Main Roads budget, is allocating \$769 million for the planning, construction and maintenance of our state controlled roads system.

Election commitments such as a Springfield to Ripley road, the Tugun bypass, the Yeppoon bypass, Tanby Road upgrade, Sunshine Motorway-Pacific Paradise interchange and associated link to David Low Way are included in this budget. The budget includes a new four-year \$571 million arterial roads infrastructure package to accelerate key roads capital programs. Some of these include completing the Caboolture northern bypass, a new two-lane link between Caloundra and Mooloolaba, four-laning on the Sunshine Motorway between Maroochydore Road and Pacific Paradise—including duplicating the Maroochy River bridge—four-laning of the Mount Lindesay Highway to Rosia Road and four-laning the Gold Coast Highway between Robert and Stevens streets.

This budget also includes \$61 million in state funding for local government assistance under the transport infrastructure development scheme. This includes roadworks undertaken by Main Roads on behalf of many small and remote communities. It is a partnership approach that means better roads,

delivered faster and working together to provide the best planning, design, construction and maintenance of roads.

The 2004-05 budget also includes \$189 million from the federal government for national highways. Combined with moneys allocated under AusLink, the federal government will this year provide Queensland with a total of \$266 million. Over a five-year period it is allocating \$1.46 billion, which is half of the \$3.2 billion we requested. As a result federal funding allocated to Queensland does not include six-laning the Ipswich Motorway—though, for the member for Moggill's benefit, it includes a study of a half northern bypass—upgrading the Gateway Motorway or meeting us half way on works to the Acacia Ridge rail crossing.

Last week the *Courier Mail's* roads solution report was a stinging indictment of the federal government's lack of funding for federal roads. Twenty-seven per cent of all journeys on Australia's national highways are on Queensland roads. For the first eight years of the Howard government, Queensland received 24 per cent of National Highway funding but this will drop to 19 per cent. Why is this happening in Australia's fastest growing state with a swag of coalition marginal seats?

The Beattie government is determined to deliver the best possible transport outcomes for all Queenslanders by working with the private sector, the community and other levels of government on the planning and management of our road network. This Main Roads budget is delivering roads and playing a vital role by connecting Queenslanders and improving our economic and social wellbeing.

Miss SIMPSON: I refer to page 78 of the Capital Statement under Allocation for Main Roads which shows an increase in allocations to Main Roads from \$777 million to \$812 million up \$35 million dollars. The Capital Statement shows that the estimated actual expenditure for the department last year was \$740 million meaning that there is a carryover of \$36 million. With the carryover of \$36 million and an increase in funding over last year of only \$35 million dollars that road funding has been effectively decreased by \$1 million this year?

Mr LUCAS: The *Courier Mail* is not in the business of promoting what the state government does. The *Courier Mail* in its report entitled *The roads solution*, which I would recommend people read, says at page 32—I do not agree with everything in it; but I do agree with this—

In Main Roads total capital works budget for the state as a whole will increase from \$716 million in 2003-04 to \$782 million in 2004-05, an increase of 9.2 per cent.

That is what an objective third party said about Queensland's road spend. The total controlled operating budget for Main Roads was \$2.321 billion. This includes allowance for a fully funded equity return of \$1.14 billion, land consumed under roads, depreciation and other financial transactions. Of this, \$1.037 billion was made available for regional roads programs in 2004-05, planning, construction, maintenance operations and administration reflecting an increase of \$26.25 million over the 2003-04 state budget.

Since December 2003, extra state roads infrastructure investment of \$1 billion over and above normal road funding sources has been provided by the state government. An extra \$186.25 million over three years has been provided under the Smart State Building Fund. An extra \$301 million in Beattie government election commitments over five years has been provided. An extra \$570.9 million has been provided under the new arterial roads infrastructure package over four years. \$32 million will be provided in 2003-04, ramping up to \$242 million in 2005-06 and \$409 million in 2006-07.

There has been a significant increase. Excluding special initiatives Pacific Motorway funding this year there is a \$36 million increase for the state funded component of the regional roads program. This has brought the total increase in state funding for regional roads programs over the past seven Beattie government budgets to \$244 million. By comparison, since the federal government assumed power in 1996-97, Queensland has fallen almost \$114 million behind in RN funding.

This is a big spending budget on roads for Queensland. It is accepted by other parties, that are not apologists for the government, that there has been a significant improvement in our expenditure. You only have to look at the projects. Your area is one of the biggest winners out of this budget. It is wonderful news on the Sunshine Coast in terms of our road network. That is the case also on the Gold Coast, in Brisbane and other areas.

Miss SIMPSON: I certainly welcome the funding which is coming particularly in some of the out years. It is not so much in this budget as in the out years. I would like to see it sooner. My question related to the budget papers not a *Courier Mail* article. The budget papers that you have presented show that there is a carryover of \$36 million, an underspend last year. When you put that into the equation you realise that there has not really been a net increase in the amount of money that you have allocated for budget capital spending on main roads in Queensland in this coming year. That was my question with regard to your budget papers. Why has there been in real terms a decrease by \$1 million? There is a \$36 million carryover from an underspend in last year's budget. Could the minister please explain?

Mr LUCAS: I indicated before the significant additional injections of Queensland government funding this year. But if you also want me to talk about the decreased federal budget funding, I am happy to do that.

Miss SIMPSON: I want you to talk about your underspend and the fact that you just rolled it over in this budget. Is that actually underspend? Could the minister tell us whether that is correct?

The CHAIR: The member for Maroochydore has asked the question. Let the minister answer.

Mr LUCAS: I will get Karen Peut the director of our roads program to indicate what has happened in relation to Commonwealth funding of roads this year.

Miss SIMPSON: No, the underspend. The money that you did not spend last year and the rollover into this budget.

The CHAIR: I will remind the member that she has asked the question again. I will go on to the next question if she is not careful.

Ms Peut: I think you will find that when the state budget came down the Commonwealth had not announced the AusLink figures. At the time of the federal budget we were \$55 million worse off this year than we were last year. So that gives some indication of the differences. In terms of the underexpenditure, we have spent 97 per cent of the adjusted budget this year. That would be an indication of the wet weather we have had throughout the year.

Mr LUCAS: I think that is an outstanding achievement.

Miss SIMPSON: Could the minister confirm that the underspend is \$36 million?

Mr LUCAS: If that is what the budget papers say I would expect the budget papers to be accurate.

Miss SIMPSON: I refer to your answer to non-government question on notice No. 6 regarding internal audits conducted by the Department of Main Roads. Your answer confirms that of the 23 audits you provided in your answer in parliament 22 were not actually conducted in the year I asked about. Besides being deliberately misleading, your answer actually means that only one audit was conducted for Main Roads in the last financial year despite previous revelations about waste. Why was only one audit undertaken last year.

Mr Golding: The Internal Audit Unit exists for a range of reasons, but principally to provide me, as the accountable officer, and my senior management team with independent advice and an added assurance as to compliance with legislative and statutory requirements, cost effectiveness and efficiency, reliability of all of our financial and other statements, protection of efficient utilisation of public funds and the adequacy and accuracy of our accounting and computer systems.

For the 2003-04 financial period, the Internal Audit Unit of Main Roads reported on the outcome of 23 internal audits. I would note for the previous year there were only 13 audits completed. In accordance with best practice, the Main Roads audit committee reviewed and endorsed management actions to implement the recommendations within each of the 23 internal audit reports presented during the 2003-04 period. Twenty-two of the audits finalised in the 2003-04 financial year had been initiated in the financial year 2002-03. But the existing unit at that time was unable to complete them and they had to be completed by the unit that is now in place over the financial year 2003-04.

During 2003-04, the unit also conducted 75 special investigations and provided fraud and corruption prevention training across Main Roads to 442 staff. By comparison, in the previous year only 41 investigations were completed and 201 people were provided with fraud and prevention training. Further during this period that we are talking of, 2003-04, an independent review of the unit was undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers. The structure of the unit was amended to better reflect the business needs of the department.

During the same year, 2003-04, a number of former members of staff attached to the unit sought to pursue other career opportunities which resulted in a certain amount of down time as replacements were being found. As the chair and, I am sure, the committee would appreciate, this all takes time. I would like to say that the department and particularly me as the accountable officer remain committed to ensure that we fully meet our obligations. I would like to assure the committee that the audit committee actively monitors and guides the internal audit function in accordance with its approved charter.

Miss SIMPSON: I would like to note that our questions on notice, both in the parliament and through this committee, were actually about the number of audits that were conducted, not the number of audits that were reported on. That is why I made that comment before, because the answers that came back did not in fact answer the questions that we had put forward about the number that were conducted.

The CHAIR: I would remind the member for Maroochydore not to continue making statements but to ask questions. Have you got another question?

Miss SIMPSON: I certainly do. With regard to the audits, I want it noted that there has been a lot of concern that this particular audit team has been gutted. In light of the fact that it is a major department that has such important oversight, will the minister also provide advice as to when those special audits that were undertaken in 2003-04 were initiated?

Mr LUCAS: I do not have any problem with doing that. Can I just say that, in relation to this business of you noting what you want to note, this is not a noting exercise. You can note what you want to note elsewhere.

One only has to have a look at the details of the audits that have been provided in previous answers to questions on notice to show that they are rigorous. I expect the most rigorous standards of audit from my departments. That is why these audits are very broad ranging in what they do. The suggestion that you have made that there has been some gutting or otherwise of auditors is simply not true—simply not true—and not borne out by the nature and the rigour of the audits that have been conducted.

Can I also say that I had a meeting with the Auditor-General a little while ago re-emphasising to him the strong commitment from both me personally and more so from my director-general of the importance of rigour in audits and our wish to fully cooperate. I said, 'I have absolute confidence in my department, Auditor-General, but in any case I'm telling you here personally of my strong commitment to the audit process.' So please rest assured, honourable member, that rigorous audit will continue. It has been occurring and will continue.

Miss SIMPSON: Minister, I refer to the capital acquisition section on page 2-42 of the MPS which indicates that capital projects in relation to noise are one of the five principal areas of capital roads expenditure, and I ask: why has there been a considerable delay in construction of sound barriers on Gympie Road and a number of other areas?

Mr LUCAS: I might call Bob Drew for that. That is essentially an operational question, so we might get Bob to give us some information on that.

Mr Drew: Could you just repeat the question because I did not catch it properly?

Miss SIMPSON: I was wondering why there has been a considerable delay in construction of sound barriers on Gympie Road and a number of other areas.

Mr Drew: I am not aware of specific delays on Gympie Road. We are constructing barriers on Gympie Road in the vicinity of Kildonan Avenue. If there have been some delays, it could be because of material shortages. The timber that we use in barriers is especially treated for fire ratings and for pest protection, and sometimes there are delays in the supply. I would have to check with our district people specifically on that. Again, generally, in other areas I am not aware of any specific delays, but again if there are delays they are normally related to delays in materials. A contractor that does do a significant number of the noise barriers for us has had some financial difficulties and consequently they have gone into receivership, but arrangements have been in place for those contracts to be picked up.

Mr LUCAS: With no loss to the government, I might add.

Mr Drew: Yes, with no loss to the government. That could account for some delays as well.

Miss SIMPSON: Thank you.

Mr LUCAS: That is a specific case and we will have a look into that.

Miss SIMPSON: Minister, is it not correct that the contractor awarded a major sound barrier contract was Noise Barriers Pty Ltd trading as Fenco which is now under external administration with debts of approximately \$3.3 million? Minister, what due diligence processes are in place in relation to the awarding of contracts by Main Roads given that in this case the insolvency report claims that the company was insolvent as at 30 June 2003? Minister, does that mean that the company may have been insolvent when it was awarded Main Roads Department contracts?

Mr LUCAS: I will ask my director-general in the first instance to respond to that in more detail except to say this: we do not do an audit of companies before we do business with them. We have a prequalification process. But every time you enter into a contract with someone, you do not go and send the forensic auditors in there to check out their financial position. We have a prequalification process, and that is important, and we ensure that the state purchasing policy is adhered to. One of the things that I am very keen on ensuring is that not only of course is value for money important but also a contractor's past performance is important. Having said that, I might ask the director-general specifically to respond to the issue.

I will say this to you: in the future any government department will expect from time to time that there will be a proportion of business failures in companies that we deal with. The one way out of that is to say, 'Okay. We'll only deal with Fortune 500 companies or ASX listed companies.' What does that do for small business? One of the major complaints of small business is that it is sometimes hard for them to get a credit rating and hard for them to work in an environment where all the big kahunas are there getting all of the business. Companies can have zero bad credit by only dealing with BHP, the state

government, the federal government and all those sorts of people, or they can actually be sensible about it. It is a matter of getting sensible policies in relation to people whom we deal with. I regret any business failure, but from time to time that will happen. I am told by my department that there is no net loss to the government in relation to that; our position is protected. Having said that, I will ask the director-general to respond in more detail.

Mr Golding: The department has in place a rigorous set of prequalification guidelines for all contractors which looks at their technical performance, their financial performance and past performance on the job—technical capability, financial capability and past performance. This contractor would be the same as any others in having to comply with those requirements. If at the time when the contract was awarded they were under difficulties, if that was exposed to us, we would run checks. If it was not exposed to us, obviously we would not be able to. From time to time, as the minister has indicated, contractors do run into financial difficulties. Where they go into receivership, we would sit down with the receiver and negotiate the best deal we can for the public interest in terms of getting the work done at the right price. This particular circumstance has been referred to us from another source. At the moment I have it under active investigation in terms of whether we have acted in accordance with company law and the state purchasing policy. I would have to say that I am very confident we have, because we have handled these things before.

Miss SIMPSON: Minister, I refer again to the contracts awarded to Fenco. Minister, are you aware that 11 days after administrators were appointed to Noise Barriers Pty Ltd trading as Fenco the contract was transferred to a company Fenco Noise Barriers Pty Ltd, which is owned by the sons of the major shareholder of the former company, and, if so, do you approve of these arrangements?

Mr LUCAS: Do I approve of the fact that it was awarded to another company?

Miss SIMPSON: The sons of the major shareholder of the former company.

Mr LUCAS: I do not interfere in the awarding of contracts awarded by my department. I do not get in there and say—

Miss SIMPSON: Do you think this raises some questions of propriety?

The CHAIR: Order! Let the minister answer the question.

Mr LUCAS: I do not get involved. I have a formal sign-off with ministerial delegation on certain things, but I do not involve myself in the awarding of contracts. It would be totally inappropriate for me to do so. Having said that, I am aware of the Fenco issue and the director-general just referred to the fact that I have asked him to have a look at all of these issues in relation to that to ensure that good practice and process were followed. It is very important to do that. But this will not be the first business that has failed. You only have to talk to people in the private sector. There are people who have business difficulties for whatever reason from time to time that are often outside their control, but I make no comment in relation to this particular one because I am not individually aware of that.

Having said that, I do expect my department to rigorously conduct learnings as a result of all exercises that it embarks upon. I do think that performance history is important. But I have told you that already my director-general has indicated that he is reviewing this particular matter to ensure that we are happy that best practice was followed.

Miss SIMPSON: Minister, if performance history is important, do you not think the issue of having the contract transferred to the sons of the major shareholder indicates some questions about propriety? Who is in fact investigating this and will this be investigated by an external agency to Main Roads?

Mr LUCAS: Not at this point. I have asked the director-general to have it investigated. If I ask the director-general to do it, I expect that the director-general will ensure that it is done to a very rigorous standard. I should point out that the director-general is someone who has worked under administrations of various political colours in Queensland and has done it with distinction and impartiality, and that is what I would expect him to continue to do. Having said that, the fact that someone is the son or daughter or someone in entering into a contract does not of itself disqualify them from doing it any more than it would if something occurred with your family or your relatives or your next-door neighbour necessarily disqualifying you. Having said that, I want to make sure that these issues are appropriately addressed. That is why my director-general has already been looking at this issue.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for questions by non-government members has expired.

Mrs SMITH: On page 2-1 of the MPS it is noted that population growth of 2.3 per cent for the year ended 30 June 2003 has been recorded. Can the minister explain Main Roads's strategies for managing those ever increasing economic, technological and environmental challenges facing the state's road system due to the increasing population pressure?

Mr LUCAS: As the *Courier-Mail* has been demonstrating in its report *The roads solution*, Queensland is facing an increasing transport task as a result of increased population and greater economic activity. Our population is growing at a more rapid rate than any other state with the highest net interstate migration. In 2001, 3.6 million people lived in Queensland with approximately 1,000

people moving to the sunshine Smart State every week, more than 800 of these settling in the south-east corner. While the problem is much more acute in the south-east, it is not of an isolated nature. That is indicative of Queensland's decentralised status. By 2021 five million people will call Queensland home. However, if previous population projections are anything to go by, these figures could go even higher. South-east Queensland is expected to record the strongest growth in the next 20 years when 3.6 million people are expected to be living in this region, the equivalent of today's total state population. This government is managing the increasing challenge through good planning and a responsive commitment to providing transport infrastructure and services.

The recently established Office of Urban Management is improving the coordination and planning of land use for south-east Queensland. Main Roads is working closely with OUM to ensure that the roads needs are well considered in this planning. With Queensland Transport, Main Roads is working on a revised transport coordination plan which will give greater confidence that we are doing what the community and industry require. Main Roads has a long-term vision for the development of the road network throughout Queensland, and this is published as *Roads Connecting Queenslanders*. The RCQ is the government's blueprint for the total road system over the next 20 years. In contributing to the government's broader priorities and outcomes, the RCQ concentrates Main Roads's efforts into four areas: safer roads to support safer communities, efficient and effective transport to support industry competitiveness and growth, fair access in amenities to support livable communities, and environmental management to support environmental conservation.

Through the roads alliance, Main Roads has improved its coordination with local government to ensure that we maximise the benefit that both levels of government get from their investment in the road network. As a concurrence agency under the Integrated Planning Act, Main Roads is able to ensure that good transport planning is part of the considerations given in the development and administration of the local planning schemes. This planning framework ensures that Main Roads develops the road network today with a long-term vision that meets the increasing transport challenges. Of course planning without investment does not produce results. That is why Queensland has doubled the funding for roads in real terms over the last 10 years. However, Commonwealth funding has remained flat for about 25 years with cost shifting to the states. In summary, Main Roads recognises the challenges in dealing with the social, environmental and economic issues controlling the state and is well placed to deal with them.

Mrs SMITH: On page 2-2 of the MPS I note that a four-year \$571 million arterial roads infrastructure package and an extra \$186.3 million for capital projects under the Smart State Building Fund initiatives have been included in the budget. Would you please outline how this will be distributed?

Mr LUCAS: Since December 2003, extra state roads infrastructure investment of \$1.06 billion over and above normal road funding has been provided by the state government. That is an extra \$186.25 million over three years under the Smart State Building Fund, an extra \$301 million under Beattie government election commitments, and an extra \$570.9 million under the new arterial roads infrastructure package over four years. Funding distribution is as follows: south-east Queensland, \$984 million; southern Queensland, \$9 million; central Queensland, \$42 million; and north Queensland, \$23 million. It is really quite interesting that this is extra funding. The figure for north Queensland exceeds what we will receive under AusLink in straight out funding. It is really quite amazing.

South-east Queensland. Metropolitan: \$19 million to complete construction of the \$26.25 million Linkfield connection road—the member for Aspley will be very happy about that; \$5 million to complete bus priority works on Gympie Road, Kedron; \$1.5 million for traffic management improvements on the Houghton Highway.

North coast hinterland: \$35 million to undertake interchange improvements at Mooloolaba and Maroochydore roads on the Sunshine Motorway; \$15 million to complete the Sippy Downs interchange; and \$2.95 million to complete bus priority measures.

South coast hinterland: \$17.15 million to complete the \$18 million project for four-laning of the Nerang-Broadbeach Road from Ross Street to Nielsens Road; \$14.2 million to complete the four-lane link on Brisbane-Beenleigh Road between Brisbane and Beenleigh; \$7.5 million to complete noise amelioration works on the Pacific Motorway; and \$2.8 million to accelerate the upgrade of intersection improvements on Frank Street.

Election commitments. The Centenary Highway extension: \$120 million for stage 1, Springfield and Ripley Roads—that is a goody, a very important one—Sunshine Coast Motorway and Pacific Paradise interchange, and an extra \$120 million for the Tugun Bypass. Under our arterial roads infrastructure package—the news just keeps getting better—\$1.5 million to extend four-laning of the Mount Lindesay Highway; \$2.05 million for four-laning of key Redland Shire arterials; the member for Moggill will be happy about the \$0.5 million in 2004-05 for preliminary work to extend four-laning of Moggill Road west of Kenmore between Kilkivan Avenue and Pullenvale Road, scheduled for completion in 2006-07 at a total cost of \$16.28 million.

North coast hinterland: The Caboolture bypass, stages 2 and 3, \$0.5 million in 2004-05 for a new two-lane arterial road from Caloundra to Mooloolaba, scheduled for completion in 2007-08 at a total cost of \$56 million; four-laning works on the Sunshine Motorway between Maroochydore Road and Pacific

Paradise; \$1 million for four-laning of the Caloundra Road between the Bruce Highway and Pierce Avenue.

Can I have an extension, please? There is so much good news here.

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr LUCAS: Half a million dollars for four-laning of Maroochydore Road between the Bruce Highway and Kunda Park.

South coast hinterland: The Gold Coast Highway at Stevens Street, four-laning and widening of Loders Creek Bridge; four-laning of the Nerang-Broadbeach road, Allambe Cemetery to Ross Street.

That is just the flavour of it. I have not spoken about the ones in southern Queensland, which are also significant, or in central Queensland. Indeed, I might just mention that for North Queensland, the allocation of \$6 million will accelerate the upgrading of the peninsula developmental road. We have sought money from the federal government to help but we are not holding our breath on that one. We are putting our money up, anyway. There is \$3 million to complete bus priority measures on state controlled roads in Cairns; \$6 million for priority safety roads in Cairns; \$8 million towards construction of the \$16 million stage 1 of the Townsville port access road linking the Flinders and Bruce highways. I note that the federal opposition has promised to match that, but we do not have a commitment from the federal government yet.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, you might be aware that the Corduroy Creek to Banyan Creek section of the Bruce Highway in North Queensland is closed, on average, 79 hours per year. What is the state government doing about this?

Mr LUCAS: Flooding in the Tully area is one of the major issues on the Bruce Highway between Townsville and Cairns. I know there is a bit of rivalry between people in Townsville and Cairns but they actually do talk to each other and they like to drive between Townsville and Cairns, as do other people. This is a vital section of the federally funded National Highway system. It traverses the Tully and Murray River flood plains around 80 kilometres north of Ingham for a length of about 15 kilometres. Flooding regularly occurs here and road closures extend for days on end.

Projects to improve flood immunity at this location have been included in Queensland's National Highway funding submissions, in one form or another, since the mid 1990s. That is how long we have been asking for it. As a good roads planner, the Main Roads department has undertaken a number of studies. In 1986-87 it conducted a study into flooding and route locations. In 1997 it conducted a review of environmental impacts. There is currently an involvement with Queensland Rail on a multi-agency study led by DNRME to comprehensively model the flood plain. This project is worth about \$80 million.

The Deputy Prime Minister went up to North Queensland the other day and said that this was a state responsibility. I don't know how many people in Queensland would honestly think that the Bruce Highway, highway one, is a state responsibility. It is a federal highway; it is a federal responsibility. Queensland went backwards under AusLink when one looks at our proportion compared to that of the other states. The big, big losers were the people in regional Queensland situated along the Bruce Highway. Funding of \$210 million over five years was all they got for the Bruce Highway north of Caboolture, for the 1,465 kilometres of road north of Caboolture. How much this year? \$10 million. Thanks very much for that. How much the year after? \$5 million. How many kilometres of road can \$5 million build? Not much?

Mr Golding: Not much.

Mr LUCAS: No. How much?

Mr Golding: It depends on the standard of the road.

Mr LUCAS: The Bruce Highway?

Mr Golding: About a lane on the Pacific Motorway. A kilometre.

Mr LUCAS: A kilometre of a lane. Not a lot. That is a real disgrace. The problem with the politicians in Canberra is that they think the National Highway is Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney. There is an enormous amount of money being spent on four-laning the Pacific Highway—and that is great—but what about people up along the Bruce Highway? They need \$80 million. Frankly, it is disgraceful that the federal government will not meet their funding requirements. It is a real loss for the people of north and far north Queensland. It is time the federal government did the right thing by the people of that part of the world.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, what checks are in place to inform people when they buy property if there is a protected road corridor or a noisy road near that property?

Mr LUCAS: As a standard practice, the Main Roads department either responds to the purchaser by way of a letter or by stamping official response documents indicating that there is a protected road corridor or a noisy road near that property. For example, there are two stamps placed on relevant responses. Stamp one, used on properties that are within a block removed from the transport corridor

reads, 'This property is adjacent to a corridor being preserved for possible future transport purposes. There is currently no approved proposal for any development of this corridor.' Stamp two, used on properties exposed to busy roads reads, 'This property may be subject to road traffic noise or nuisance. Noise reduction measures may reduce but will not eliminate noise nuisance.'

For any new developments, noise affected loss is subject to a covenant on title which alerts the purchaser that any residential building is to be constructed so that it is protected from road noise. In the past when the government constructed roads, essentially they just built it and the community had to wear it. I suppose they appreciated the road being built but far less thought was given to the information provided to members of the community. These days you have only to pick up a UBD to see that road corridors are frequently identified long before they are built so that people have that information available to them. I can think of one in my own electorate, that is, the Brisbane City Council road corridor extending Kianawah Road out to Tilley Road. That is on the map for the people to see.

The idea is to improve the information available to purchasers so that they have the physical information in front of them. Obviously, as a former solicitor, the member for Nicklin would always follow good practice by doing a Main Roads search and a Queensland Rail search and the like. In the past, a search might simply have shown that there were no known requirements over this corridor or this property. Now we provide better information because we want to encourage people to see what is happening. In many cases, if there are more detailed requirements, we encourage them to come in and talk to us and see what is happening to the roads in their part of the world. That is one of the reasons why we like to identify future road corridors as much as we can.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, I refer you to the announcement of the duplication of the Maroochy River bridge and the Pacific Paradise interchange including the link road to David Low Way. Can you please provide an update of these initiatives?

Mr LUCAS: The 2004-05 state budget provides \$110 million over five years as part of the arterial roads infrastructure package to duplicate the Sunshine Motorway between Maroochydore and Pacific Paradise into four lanes, including a new bridge over the Maroochy River. This will allow completion of full upgrading by 2009. You can see the duplication on that slide. That is a very significant project, worth \$110 million. When you look at the other work we are doing on the Sunshine Coast, you can see that it is very significant and will make a real difference.

Following commitments to complete the four-laning to Maroochydore Road as part of the normal RIP funding sources and the extra funds of \$50 million provided in December 2003 under the Smart State Building Fund initiative, this project will complete the four-laning of the Sunshine Motorway from the Bruce Highway to Pacific Paradise. The Pacific Paradise traffic planning study investigated options for improving safety and amenity on the regional road network in the Pacific Paradise area. That study took longer than Main Roads would have liked. This was mainly due to the lack of experience of the consultant briefed by Main Roads, the need to carefully consider the impacts of the new road link north of Pacific Paradise near adjacent national park and the Pacific Paradise primary school, the fit with the CAMCOS corridor, and the recent election delayed issues as well. The preferred study option included a new link road north of Pacific Paradise from the Sunshine Motorway to David Low Way near the Maroochy airport. The study also proposes improvements to David Low Way for the safety of local residents. In this budget, as recommended by the study, the state government has provided an extra \$35 million to honour an election commitment to construct the Pacific Paradise interchange on the Sunshine Motorway, and a new road between the motorway and the David Low Way north of Pacific Paradise. Detailed planning—can I just finish?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr LUCAS: This project is scheduled for completion by June 2008. As part of special initiatives, 2004 election commitments and Arup, the state government will provide Main Roads with an extra \$145 million over the next four years to fast track capital improvements on the Sunshine Motorway, an increase of 135 per cent over previous years on the Sunshine Coast.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. The time allocated for questions from government members has expired. I now call upon the member for Nicklin.

Mr WELLINGTON: Minister, at page 2-17 of the MPS you refer to the Main Roads Department managing about 34,000 kilometres of road corridors in Queensland. Accordingly, your department's construction arm on the north coast is a very important employer of many people in many jobs, including traffic controllers, surveyors, line markers, and highway slashing personnel. Minister, what guarantee can you give me and my constituents on the Sunshine Coast that the company your contracting arm employs to perform this work is a worthy company that pays its employees a fair and reasonable wage and that you do not automatically award the contract to the lowest tender, which provides the lowest wage and the worst conditions for its employees?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question because I think it is an excellent point. I would love to be able to take into account whether employees did the right thing in terms of what I think they should pay their employees when it comes to their contracting business. I will tell you now

what the federal government makes us do. Any major federal government funded project now is subject to the national construction code of practice. This state no longer has the ability to tell employers to pay the award or better. If they comply with the law, including rip-off federal industrial law, then we cannot legally discriminate against them. It is not possible for my department to take action. Clearly, we check—and I am aware of this instance—to ensure that industrial law is complied with as far possible. I don't sit down every day and do a time and wages check, and so on. I am told that that was the case. However, we have no lawful ability to discriminate on the selection under the industrial jurisdiction award and rates where legitimate choice exists—for example, federal or state award—permanent, part-time or casual rates. In relation to the selection criteria generally, it is 65 per cent on price and 35 per cent on quality of work. We look at a whole lot of factors, depending on the nature of the work. I am sympathetic to the point that you make, honourable member, but I cannot say much other than that I reckon people should join the union to ensure they have someone to defend their industrial interests because, unfortunately, you cannot rely on the federal government to do it.

Mr WELLINGTON: Minister, will you take up this matter with your federal colleagues, because of the serious nature of it, to ensure that if your federal colleagues are elected at the next federal election they will amend the law to ensure that contracts are awarded on a fair and reasonable basis and not what appears to be happening at the moment?

Mr LUCAS: I am not sure if you can address it by the contract way. I will let you in on a bit of a secret: I will be voting Labor at the next federal election because of a whole range of issues, including the fact that I want industrial justice for workers in this country and this is an aspect of it.

Miss SIMPSON: My question is to the minister. I would like to actually thank the minister for allocating funding for the duplication of the Maroochy River bridge. I know that you do not like me noting things, but I note that your predecessor had not done that. So it is very welcome. We would have liked to have seen it happen quicker, but I welcome the fact as it has not been there before.

Mr LUCAS: You and I are the dream team, Fiona. That is the thing, you see.

Miss SIMPSON: That is going to set tongues wagging. I acknowledge that and I want to thank you for bringing that into the budgetary process and also the duplication of the Maroochy Road to the highway. My question is in regard to the Pacific Paradise road network study. This study was agreed to by Vaughan Johnson when he was minister. The consultant was appointed by Steve Bredhauer some two years later in about the year 2000. It took nearly four years for it to be completed. How much did this study cost and why did such a painfully long study not have a more detailed design component?

Mr LUCAS: I do not have the cost figure in front of me, but I will supply that. There were considerable delays during the study, particularly with community engagement. The preferred options were presented in a public display in November 2002. Can I say—and I was frank with you before—that there were delays in the consultant's finalisation of the report. We have looked at our processes for managing consultants to ensure that future studies are completed in a more timely manner.

I have released a final report, which identified the future strategy for state controlled roads in the Pacific Paradise, Mudjimba and Marcoola areas of the Sunshine Coast. The key component of the strategy is the interchange on the motorway and the new road link to the David Low Way near the airport. We honoured an election commitment in the budget to fund it. So as I said to you, on what I am advised I think that the consultant could have been a bit quicker, but the main point is that the money is there and it is being funded. That is ultimately what people want. The report is out there in the public domain so that people can see what it says. This is a learning process and we will continue to do that. But as you acknowledged before, it has been a big win on Sunshine Coast in terms of the road network.

Miss SIMPSON: So you will provide the cost of the study on notice?

Mr LUCAS: Yes.

Miss SIMPSON: I would like to ask a question with regard to the Tugun bypass project. Page 76 of this year's Capital Statement states that the Tugun bypass has increased by \$120 million to \$360 million. In last year's statement the total estimated cost of the project was \$240 million. Will you tell the committee why the project cost increased by \$120 million in the last year?

Mr LUCAS: It did not and, as you know full well, there is no surprise in the costing of the Tugun bypass. I cannot think of a single issue—and the member for Moggill will be pleased to know that the Ipswich Motorway is probably rivalling it at the moment—that has occupied proportionately more of my time than the Tugun bypass. The Premier indicated in the week before the election, if I recall correctly, that we expected that the Tugun bypass would cost \$360 million. I do not think you can get more up front than that—telling someone in the middle of an election campaign what it is going to cost. That is what the Premier indicated would be the cost of the Queensland government's contribution.

Initially, in March 2003 the federal government announced that it would match the Queensland government's commitment of \$120 million towards the cost of the project. Their funding would have commenced with the first \$60 million in 2006-07. The bypass itself is a very expensive piece of road. There is a whole lot of reasons why that is the case. Firstly, you are constructing the road in a

reasonably environmentally sensitive area. Secondly, you are constructing it in essentially a sand location. Thirdly, you are constructing a tunnel—by a cut and cover—that has to go under the runway of an airport. Tunnels are not unlike swimming pools in that if you do not anchor them properly, they will pop out of the ground. So it is an extremely expensive piece of road construction for us to undertake. You cannot have it popping out of the ground (a) in any case and (b) when there is a runway going over the top of it. So this is a major issue in terms of the cost of the project.

We indicated that it would cost a total of \$360 million. I tell you what: you get into trouble when you do not allocate money; you get into trouble when you do. The fact is that we will build this project. We are going through the design approval processes with the Commonwealth and the state in relation to the environmental issues that are addressed. We announced the costing before the election. You could not get any more democratic than that.

Miss SIMPSON: You also get in trouble when the Roads Implementation Program had a lesser amount than an internal memo of the Department of Main Roads back in August, which indicated that there was a problem with cost. Yet your RIP did not reflect that. Did the same \$360 million cost apply to the eastern bypass proposed prior to the election?

Mr LUCAS: Yes.

Miss SIMPSON: So why was that not in the RIP, then?

Mr LUCAS: The RIP, I am told, reflected the state's commitment to the project at that point in time. The state has a full commitment to the project. It was announced in an election campaign. I do not think that you could get more democratic than what the Premier did.

Miss SIMPSON: I refer to the Tugun bypass project which is mentioned on page 76 of the Capital Statement. Last year, \$25 million was allocated to this project. Based on expenditure to 30 June 2003, reported in the Capital Statement, \$12 million was spent last year on the project leaving \$30 million to be carried over to this year. How much of this \$12 million was spent on the preparation of documentation and planning for that ill-fated eastern bypass proposal that was announced on election eve?

Mr LUCAS: I do not have that figure in front of me and I would not have thought of it very much at all in relation to the preparation of the proposal. I do not have the documents in front of me, but I would be happy to provide them because there have been a few little stories told down on the Gold Coast and not everyone has actually been honest about what took place. The planning process that took place was a Commonwealth and state planning process. Queensland was not the driver for this. As part of that Commonwealth-state-New South Wales process, the Commonwealth in particular, and also New South Wales, wanted us to have a look at B options—in other words, options that went east of the airport. Indeed, the options that they were canvassing east of the airport were ones that would have far more impact upon local residents than the B4 option that the Premier went out with. This was part of the Commonwealth-state project.

Obviously, you look at alternatives when you look at roads. So that was not something new. The B4 route was something that was distilled later on, but as far as I am aware, B1, B2 and B3—I knew that there was a B2 and a B3; I presume there was a B1—were essentially done at the urging of other parties. But that is an appropriate planning process. So do not come here and suggest, 'Gee, the Commonwealth do not know anything about that.' They were right bang on it. If you have a look at the announcements and the documents that we signed with the Commonwealth, you will see that they wanted to absolve themselves of responsibility for route selection, because if it became controversial they wanted to blame us.

Final route selection is a matter for the Commonwealth. At the same time, in a committee chaired by DOTARS, they are there canvassing eastern options. So we got the best option. We got the C4 result. I will provide you with a whole swag of documents that just show what people in the Commonwealth knew when it came to eastern options. They knew plenty, because they were part of it and they were the main people pushing for it.

Miss SIMPSON: Just as a point of clarification, are you going to provide the cost of that alternative plan?

Mr LUCAS: Are you talking about B4?

Miss SIMPSON: How much of that came out of that \$12 million?

Mr LUCAS: It would be an estimate; it would not have been costed. I am happy to provide some sort of an indication of that. I have no difficulty with Main Roads doing that. This is about delivering a project.

Miss SIMPSON: So that will be taken on notice?

Mr LUCAS: You asked me a question; I am answering the question. I will now answer the question. That will provide an estimate of the costing of that work. I will also provide a bit more background, as I said, as to what the Commonwealth did and knew. The good news is that I have a

whole lot of joint state-Commonwealth-New South Wales documents that actually show it from their point of view. So I would be pleased to provide them to you, because you want to make them available to people on the Gold Coast who have not had the truth told to them when it comes to the Commonwealth's involvement.

Having said that, the C4 route is a wonderful opportunity for the people of the Gold Coast. It is the best route. Environmental issues are able to be managed. You would have heard earlier that our rail link will be able to follow the road route. It links in very nicely with the New South Wales road there. Obviously, a significant proportion of the road is in New South Wales where we have been working, I am told, very well with them. The other day I was briefed on how things are going and I am told that they are going even better than we anticipated. They are going extremely well. We need to go through the Commonwealth and state approval processes and we are doing that at the present time.

At the moment, each year an enormous amount of money is wasted by people sitting in traffic at Tugun. They expected it to be sorted out. I am pleased to say that, with a fair bit of hard work, we have sorted it out. We are not finally there. We need to go through the approval processes and then start building the road. This will make a major improvement to people not just in Queensland but in New South Wales as well. But what was not a solution for the people on the Gold Coast was to say, 'We are not going to build the Tugun bypass. It is in the too-hard basket.'

If we did not have the cooperation of New South Wales, I do not have the legal power to make them do something on New South Wales land. So we would rely on the cooperation of the Commonwealth and New South Wales. So the only people who all along were saying, 'We want to build the Tugun bypass and we will take the necessary steps to do it' were the Queensland government. We had difficulties with the cooperation of New South Wales on the western route. We had difficulties with the cooperation of the Commonwealth on the eastern route, notwithstanding that they had signed up to documents where they were actually keen on looking at it as a fall-back option.

What I am elected to do—what I am paid money to do—is to solve these issues. I am delighted with the Tugun bypass project. It is something that we are doing. This is a major improvement to people not only on the Gold Coast but also in northern New South Wales. I thank my officers from Main Roads for the wonderful work that they have done. I just should say to you that, for the Pacific Paradise planning study, approximately \$415,000.

Miss SIMPSON: I refer to page 1-3 of the MPS which refers to projects in the south-east region and the interim safety works on the Ipswich Motorway. Last month the Department of Main Roads stopped the resurfacing of the roadway because of a drop in temperature. As a result, we have a reduced speed limit and other sections where the surface has been stripped prior to resurfacing. Is it not correct that not only had the cold overnight temperatures been predicted by the weather bureau but also that they normally occur in the middle of winter? Why was the work programmed for then?

Mr LUCAS: One of the problems with the Ipswich Motorway is that there is a total lack of federal government commitment to spending money on it. Some \$720 million worth in relation to the Ipswich Motorway—

Miss SIMPSON: Do they need to provide weather reports as well?

Mr LUCAS: Do I get six minutes now for the first question and then the second question?

The CHAIR: I think I might just give you a warning again. Let's not go down this path.

Mr LUCAS: One of the real concerns that we are having with the Ipswich Motorway—because I know that Dr Flegg wants to see the half northern bypass—is that it is National Highway. It is a major arterial route that has exceeded its capacity. It has been a National Highway for as long as I can remember. We undertook a joint federal-state study into what we needed to do with that National Highway. It identified approximately \$720 million in work that had to be done, including six-laning the Ipswich Motorway and safety lane upgrades.

If you do not fund the Ipswich Motorway, half northern bypasses are not solutions, because the majority of traffic goes along the Ipswich Motorway either onto the Centenary Highway or into the south-west suburbs of Brisbane or into the city. Very little of the traffic goes down onto the Logan Motorway. It either goes down to the Gold Coast or up to the port in my electorate. Therefore, it does not deal with the majority of those traffic issues. You would have noted in the *Queensland Times* the other day—if you had seen it—major concerns being raised about half northern bypasses when it comes to the flood hydrology. There will be a dam and it will be all through Moggill. The member for Moggill would not be too keen on that, and neither would Ian Cameron—who, I might add, is an engineering consultant of, I am told, international renown. That is what that says about that.

In relation to the surface upgrade works, obviously prudent practice is to not continue with that sort of work when weather conditions or coldness results in difficulty with adhesion of the road surface. That is a problem that is not unique to Queensland; it is a problem that happens when it gets cold in various places. I am also advised that there were some wet weather delays in relation to completing the project. It is one small component of what needs to happen on the Ipswich Motorway. If the

Commonwealth government actually provided the money and provided the commitment to doing it, we could get stuck in there and do it. With \$720 million we could do it in five years. That would make a real difference.

One other thing I will say is that all of the people live south of the Ipswich Motorway. What are they going to do? Fly over the Ipswich Motorway to get onto a half-northern bypass in the electorate of Moggill? This is a major issue, and I will continue to fight the Commonwealth government on it.

Miss SIMPSON: Minister, I refer to the Road Project Works (Rehabilitation) output and note that there will be no activity under this output for 2004-05. A reference is made to a review of the accounting treatment last year. What was the reason for changing the way this expenditure has been reported? Will you make a copy of the review that was undertaken available to the committee?

Mr LUCAS: Can you give me a page reference?

Miss SIMPSON: Project Works. I do not have a page number.

Mr LUCAS: I am told that that relates to the change from accrual to cash accounting. Under accrual accounting principles, the bulk of rehabilitation and programmed maintenance activities are capitalised at year end because these activities are directed at preserving and restoring the condition of the road network. The reason there will be no activity under this output for 2004-05 is that a review of the accounting treatment of this expenditure was conducted in 2003-04. The result of this review was that this expenditure should be capitalised—\$24.6 million. The total rehabilitation expenditure is approximately \$190 million per year.

Miss SIMPSON: Would you be able to make a copy of the review available to the committee?

Mr LUCAS: I will give consideration to that. It is probably available under FOI, so on that basis—

Miss SIMPSON: Save time and money.

Mr LUCAS: I will see what I can do. It might not be a document that my department has, either. We will check that. It might be something that you have to address to others.

Miss SIMPSON: I note the statement about a clean, liveable and healthy environment on page 2-45 of the MPS, which states—

When sufficient road capacity is provided and congestion is reduced, speed improves and vehicle emissions fall.

Can you advise if staff of the Department of Main Roads have had any involvement in work being undertaken in relation to the Brisbane City Council's north-south tunnel project? If so, what has been the cost of any services provided and how will these costs be recouped?

Mr LUCAS: I do not know if I have the costings there at the moment. Certainly Queensland Transport has been working with the city council. I am told that Main Roads has as well. There would not be a cost so much charged for it, but I will say that the project governance interface arrangements between the Brisbane City Council and the state include state government liaison committees of the directors-general of Main Roads and QT; a state government working party, deputy directors-general and executive directors; portfolio coordination, Deputy Director-General, Queensland Transport and General Manager, Strategic Planning and Development, Main Roads; and an integrated working group, regional manager and regional adviser.

In relation to the north-south tunnel proposed by Lord Mayor Soorley, or TransApex stage 1 as Mayor Campbell Newman provides, the initial estimated capital cost is about \$1 billion for stage 1 and another \$1 billion for stages 2 and 3. The proposal would include a toll to generate the revenue stream.

The state has a number of requirements in relation to this. First of all, we want to make sure it complies with the state's tolling policy. I think people on the Sunshine Coast would have an acute view on the state's tolling policy, bearing in mind the Sunshine Coast motorway issues in the past. That policy is that we do not believe in shutting off other roads to make sure people use a toll road. That is a very strong thing. The second requirement is that it is technically and financially viable. The third requirement is that the state's risk exposure be minimised. Ultimately the state stands behind any local authority, so we have to make sure that interest is protected. Other requirements are that appropriate ameliorative measures be taken, that impacts on the surrounding traffic network be acceptable and that there be value for money under the PPP framework.

I want to send this message quite clearly to the people of Queensland. The state government will give all cooperation to the Brisbane City Council in relation to this and the other projects. I am not playing politics with this. We want to give all cooperation to the Brisbane City Council, provided we make sure the state interest is protected in terms of tolling, the cost and so on. I will not be standing in the way of the mayor doing these things. I want my departments to work cooperatively with the Brisbane City Council because, frankly, people are not interested in political point scoring. They are interested in seeing if this is a viable proposal. Let us get state and council working together. That is what I will be doing and that is what I expect my department to do.

The CHAIR: The time allocated to questions by non-government members has expired. I now call the member for Aspley.

Ms BARRY: Minister, I note that page 2-31 of the MPS states that road asset maintenance is one of the largest employers in rural communities. Could you please outline to the committee the benefits of this to regional Queensland?

Mr LUCAS: Yes. Ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation are necessary to provide a safe and efficient road network. They also help to protect our existing \$25 billion road asset against premature expensive failures. The state budget recognises the importance of roads to rural and regional Queensland in terms of assisting regional development, improving road safety, improving basic community access and ensuring the financial viability of rural and regional communities through provision of local employment opportunities. Consistent with the policy objective of the Beattie government, 56.8 per cent of the \$1.037 billion regional road works program will be spent outside the south-east corner in 2004-05.

Main Roads is a major employer in this state directly through contractors, consultants, local government and RoadTek and indirectly through subcontractors, other road suppliers and supporting industries. In 2004-05, \$324 million, or 38 per cent of the state funded roads program, will be spent on rehabilitation, programmed and routine maintenance.

Road maintenance performance contracts are established primarily with local government and RoadTek across Queensland to provide routine maintenance service of roads and structures, covering for example basic repair activities of pavements such as pothole patching or the replacement of old road signs and guideposts. This is an effective mechanism whereby experienced road gangs are on call for emergency events during storms, accidents and road failures in order to quickly respond. It provides local work force employment, continued work force capability and ultimately local community viability.

It is the same in the Torres Strait in relation to general government services. The private sector will not often have people there, or if they want to have people there they will charge you an arm and a leg. So in these rural communities the government is a major employer, but there are also benefits. Our contracting, either through RoadTek or through local government in relation to these rural and remote communities, is a major local stability issue.

We see it as a strong commitment. Sometimes it may, in certain circumstances, be a little more expensive to have a permanent crew there. RoadTek does other work. I think it was doing some dam remediation work for the Department of Natural Resources. We are actually happy to have our work force employed proactively and constructively in these rural communities.

We have also entered into a partnership with the Roads and Traffic Authority in New South Wales to benchmark our maintenance performance across like geographic areas. We want to make sure we are doing the right thing so we can compare ourselves with it. The five-year RIP sustains some 17,500 jobs in road and supporting industries across the state. That is 17 jobs per \$1 million of roads expenditure. That is very good news in those rural and remote communities.

Ms BARRY: On page 2-12 of the MPS it is noted that there is significant uncertainty regarding the Australian government's intention with its AusLink initiative. How does this impact on planning and upgrading of national highways within Queensland?

Mr LUCAS: The Australian government released its long-awaited white paper on 7 June 2004. This confirmed that it no longer accepts its responsibility to adequately fund the National Highway system in Queensland. All members here know that it is the same distance from Brisbane to Cairns as it is from Brisbane to Melbourne. People in Canberra seem to forget that people live outside the south-east corner of this state and have every entitlement to expect reasonable treatment of their roads. The more the federal government ducks its responsibilities, the more it becomes a problem for the state and local governments. The state government spends massively more than the federal government on our roads. I am not essentially complaining that we spend more than it. It needs to spend a hell of a lot more to bring us up to the appropriate standard.

I will give an example with respect to the Ipswich Motorway. We do studies with the federal government. They recommend upgrading the Ipswich Motorway. Now the federal government wants to study a half-northern bypass. We participate in studies and it wants to put off the outcomes or not fund the outcomes.

One of our key commitments, for example, is the \$120 million Springfield extension on the end of the Centenary Highway. It is very important in that major growth area. Like any area of budgeting and expenditure, if we have to fix up the Commonwealth's neglect of the Ipswich Motorway, that is money that has to be diverted from other sources. That is basically the study we are going through at the moment—defining the transport corridor. That is a major issue for people in that part of the world, with the enormous growth there. That is what we are doing in terms of our responsibilities in the area.

It is not a matter of the states saying to the Commonwealth, 'You do everything.' We have to accept our responsibilities and we are doing that. The Deputy Prime Minister acknowledges that the state's highways are the worst in the nation. Better than that, the *Courier-Mail* acknowledges that the state's highways are the worst in the nation. I have here the *Courier-Mail* of Friday, 21 May 2004.

Members do not need to take my word for it. They can take the word of the *Courier-Mail* for it, as I know they always do. That is what it is saying.

The Australian government now expects states and territories to contribute significantly to projects on the national network, with it making funding conditional on large contributions from states and territories. The Queensland government's National Highway investment strategy reflects a 20-year vision for each corridor link on our NHS and a professional assessment of the priority projects that should be undertaken to support the agreed, albeit modest, NHS vision standards. Its desire for an increased role and influence in transport and land use planning is not matched with commensurate funding. There is an increase in funding under AusLink to Queensland, but the problem is that we have gone from 24 per cent of National Highway funding in Queensland to 19 per cent. We have 27 per cent of the National Highway journeys. I cannot for the life of me work out why. Why is the federal government doing this? Why is it rewarding Victoria and New South Wales at the expense of Queensland? It is bad road policy and it is dumb politics.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, you mentioned previously the Townsville port access road. Can you please give us some details on the associated funding arrangements for that road?

Mr LUCAS: Main Roads is undertaking the planning for the Townsville port access road project linking the Flinders and Bruce highways to the port of Townsville. It is a 10-kilometre project. Stage 1 is the Stuart bypass—2.5 kilometres linking the Flinders Highway to the Bruce Highway. Stage 2 is the eastern access corridor—that is very important because all this traffic is going through there at the moment—linking the Bruce Highway to the port.

In December 2003 the state government committed \$8 million under the Smart State Building Fund initiative to the Stuart bypass, conditional on matching federal government funding. The state government commitment is included in the current RIP over three years. On 22 December we forwarded two submissions to the federal government for matching funding for stage 1. The federal government says, 'Now we are going to fund corridors of strategic importance.' Our rail network up the coast of Queensland and west to Mount Isa is a corridor of strategic importance. How much money did we get from it? Zero. It must be a really big strategy!

I would have thought that if its new policy is to look at strategic roads, then one supporting the port of Townsville—there is a big state development economic area in there as well—would be classically the sort of stuff it would want to fund. We asked for \$8 million, or 50 per cent of an estimated \$16 million project. For stage 2—planning, land acquisition and design of the eastern access corridor—we asked for \$9.5 million, or 50 per cent of the \$19 million estimated preconstruction cost. Stage 2 will be quite expensive. We have not sought funding for the construction of stage 2 at this stage because of the need to secure federal environmental approvals for the project under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and to complete the detailed planning for this project.

They have not given us any commitments to stage 1 or stage 2 preconstruction in the recent federal budget or AusLink. The federal member for Herbert, Peter Lindsay, has said that he would secure federal funding for the overall project if the state government sought full funding of construction costs for stage 2. It is just really quite bizarre. We cannot get the \$8 million out of them to start stage 1 and they want us to ask for all of it, and then they say, 'No, we won't give it all to you because you have not done the study for stage 2'. We have not done the study for stage 2 because they have not contributed towards that cost. It is really unacceptable when it comes to the people of Townsville.

I am pleased to note that Martin Ferguson, the shadow minister for transport, said if the federal opposition were elected they would fund 50 per cent of stage 1. We are starting stage 1 anyway. We are not mucking around here; we are going to start it. It is a tragedy if the Commonwealth government will not fund that money—a tragedy—but we are starting it anyway because it is important for the people of north Queensland. We will be submitting a project proposal report for federal funding for the construction of the full Townsville port access, including the eastern access corridor, in the near future.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, can you please provide an indication of the scope of the project, time lines, costs and approval process for the upgrade to the Kuranda Range Road?

Mr LUCAS: The landmark project is a linchpin in the roll-out of the far-north Queensland regional plan which was endorsed by cabinet in 1999. In 2001, cabinet endorsed a proposed surface route upgrade involving four-laning of 12.7 kilometres of the Kennedy Highway between Smithfield and Kuranda. You can see the current alignment; it really is all over the place. That, of course, is due to the fact that it is going up a mountain range. If you are on the Kuranda rail it is very scenic; if you are on the road it is a pain in the neck. That includes 30 bridges, totalling 5.2 kilometres of bridging, to aid constructability and to enhance fauna connectivity.

We hope to publicly release the preliminary design and IAS addendum in August/September this year. This will show how the input into the design by the community and stakeholders has been used. There has been some discussion by a small minority in far-north Queensland suggesting that it is going to be an environmental issue. Far from it—in fact, it will be of significant environmental benefit. At present what happens is that those roads go through cuttings and valleys. What we will be able to do is

bridge them. By bridging them there is far less impact because, of course, the road surface is going above where the flora and fauna is. We will actually be able to get a net environmental benefit, I am instructed, in relation to this important upgrade project.

Assuming environmental approvals can be achieved by the end of 2004, business case development and financial approvals will occur during 2005. Detailed design will occur during 2006 and construction would be able to take place from 2007. It will take about 10 years to construct. We would stage it. The indicative cost in 1999 was the \$300 million to \$500 million range. The estimated project cost is about \$514 million now if constructed as 10 separate packages. On that basis, if we did it in one package, it would be lower—whether that is possible or not.

I also have to say that this is subject to funding being committed. There is no construction funding committed at this point in time, but clearly it is a priority for the government in the medium and longer term. The current phase of the project is aimed at getting environmental approvals, rezoning a part of the World Heritage area, and getting a permit for the construction under the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1988 and approval under the federal EPBC Act 1999. These approvals, if granted, are likely to occur in late 2004/early 2005. A business case will then be developed and the project will be put to cabinet for a final decision in the second half of next year.

Ms BARRY: Minister, on page 2-32 of the MPS I note that Main Roads manages 2,766 bridges on the state-controlled road network. Are there any new technologies being developed for this network? Can you please explain what the bridge information system is and how it assists as a tool for asset management and maintenance of these bridges?

Mr LUCAS: The bridge asset management system was developed to manage the operation and maintenance of Main Roads' 2,772 bridges, including 475 timber bridges, and 3,583 major culverts on state-controlled roads. It would not be a bad fundraiser—we could offer to name bridges after people and raise a bit of money doing that. BAMS is designed to create a corporate bridge inventory addressing risk of defective structures being overloaded by as of right or excess mass vehicles and to assist operational managers to develop bridge maintenance and replacement programs. BAMS covers all structures with openings greater than 1.8 metres wide and a waterway area in excess of three square metres.

BAMS comprises the following components: a bridge information system—this is a relational database that is a repository of all bridge data and is a subsystem of the road information system; bridge inspection and condition rating policy and procedures that are documented in the department's bridge inspection manual; bridge inspector training and accreditation; load capacity assessment and heavy load management policies and procedures; corporate timber bridge specification and maintenance manual; bridge maintenance prioritisation methodology and software; and guidelines for the management of substandard and defective bridges.

BAMS delivers the following outputs: a detailed asset inventory; known condition of structures delivered by accredited inspectors using robust methodology; defects and maintenance activities identified for each structure; management actions prioritised using Whichbridge software to assist operational managers develop bridge maintenance and replacement programs; defensible maintenance programs from nonfeasance and risk perspectives; consistent practical qualification of bridge capacity in terms of standard vehicle types to facilitate rapid assessment of excess mass permits and asset protection measures; development of excess mass vehicle access maps to allow route planning by industry and protection of assets; and state of the network reports.

The BAM system is a key tool in quantifying the numbers of replacement girders required to maintain the department's 475 bridges. Armed with statistics from BAMS, the department is working in conjunction with timber fabrication companies and the emerging fibre composite industry to develop manufactured alternative girders to replace timber log bridges. My old fibre composite hat in Innovation means that I am very keen to see what alternatives we have in the future to look at fibre composites for our bridge structures. It is a major expense and issue in relation to our timber bridge network with Main Roads, but it is something that we treat very seriously. There are a lot of bridges out there.

Mrs SMITH: Minister, on page 2-35 of the MPS I note the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme provides funding for local government roads. Would you please outline how the new arrangements under the Roads Alliance will enhance local governments' capabilities as road managers, and provide an overview of the funding allocated to this initiative?

Mr LUCAS: The Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme, otherwise known as TIDS, is aimed at supporting the local transport infrastructure needs of regional and rural communities throughout Queensland. In 2002 Main Roads introduced a TIDS capability subsidy for the development of local government road management capability and the implementation of the Roads Alliance. This subsidy provides an additional \$4 million to local government over two years in 2002-03 and 2003-04. This is in addition to the physical funding for TIDS construction. This is actually about acquiring a capability to make sure those local councils have those skills in administering their local government road management capability. I think the taxpayer would expect us to do that. If we are going to put

significant amounts of money in things, we want to make sure that we have some confidence that the appropriate skills across our 140 local governments in Queensland are there.

Our key focus for this funding was to build local government road and bridge asset management capability. By the end of 2004 the state and local governments should have a complete picture of the condition of Queensland's road network assessed using a consistent method statewide. This is a first for Australia. Initiatives funded under the TIDS capability subsidy are fully state funded and include assistance for local governments to purchase or upgrade road and bridge asset management systems; do road condition assessment training; collect road asset condition data information; aggregate road asset condition data statewide to obtain a complete picture of the Queensland road network; develop investment strategies for their local roads of regional significance to help them prioritise investment to the highest need road projects; and participate in regionally delivered road worker training schools with Main Roads staff.

A portion of TIDS capability funding is used for the implementation of the Roads Alliance. That is a state and local government road management process. I think the Roads Alliance is a very important initiative. Below the more major state-controlled roads is a network of roads which are not necessarily state or local government roads. We call them local roads of regional significance. In the past what has happened is each local government has gone in there and said, 'We want to fund this particular road; it is dear to us'. But in a regional sense amongst those local authorities, it may not actually have been a good outcome. The local Roads Alliance is about working the state and a group of local authorities to see what is the best for us as a region. It requires a bit of maturity. There are some fun and games that happen from time to time, I am sure, but this is about working together for that best possible outcome.

The success of the subsidy in building local government road management capability led me to announce in May this year an extension of the funding for an additional two years. We are providing a further \$2 million over two years for capability development. In addition to this total of \$6 million over four years for the improvement of local government capability, an additional \$7 million will be provided over five years from 2004-05 to accelerate improvements on the local roads of regional significance. The capability money—additional funding—is there, and the actual physical construction money is there as well.

Mrs SMITH: I also note that the only administered items for Main Roads is payments received from the federal government in respect of federal funding under its roads funding programs. Can you please outline how Queensland has fared compared to the other states?

Mr LUCAS: Yes, I can. The bottom line is that the 2004-05 budget and subsequently the five-year AusLink plan has not been good news for Queensland. I showed you this important headline before: 'State's highways worst in nation'. That is what the Commonwealth government has bequeathed to us. The Australian government's response to both Queensland's existing and growing roads funding challenge has been extremely disappointing. The federal minister's budget night advice indicated that \$194 million had been allocated to Queensland's National Highway system and roads of national importance to meet current projected commitments. This reflected a year-on-year federal budget decrease for NH/RONI programs of \$50 million. At this point Queensland's share totalled 14.3 per cent of total available federal funding for NH/RONI funds of \$1,354 million for 2004-05, down from the 25.8 per cent five-year state average.

Due to the timing of the AusLink announcement, AusLink outcomes were not able to be included in the state budget documents. Ultimately AusLink provided us with an extra \$72 million over what was included in the 2004-05 federal budget, taking Queensland's funding total to \$266 million. That is \$22 million more than Queensland was allocated for NHS and RONI in 2003-04. But the federal government contribution to Queensland roads in 2005-06 will see the state approximately \$55 million worse off. That is because federal funds will not flow until years four and five of the AusLink plan. It is funny they can get the old baby bonus out pretty quick smart in the middle of an election campaign—they are running out the doors trying to spend the money—but when it comes to important strategic projects like AusLink we get it all in years four and five.

At this point the published five-year AusLink National Highway RONI allocation for Queensland totals \$1.463 billion. That is a 22 per cent federal road funding increase to Queensland but coming off a significantly reduced five-year low, not 61 per cent, as published by former federal roads minister Senator Campbell. By comparison the state government will invest \$6.2 billion into Queensland's roads over the next five years, including an extra \$1.06 billion provided under the Smart State Building Fund, 2004 election commitments and the arterial roads implementation program over and above normal roads funding sources.

If you have a look at the funding that Queensland gets under state shares in the 2004 federal budget advice, New South Wales is 35.9, Victoria 19.4, Queensland 14.3, South Australia 4.5. You can see the real problem in terms of the Queensland government's expenditure. More appropriately, as I said, we used to get 24 per cent under the first eight years of the Howard government and now we get 19.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, I just want to refer to page 2-43 of the MPS, Major Capital Works, where significant road safety benefits are listed with a capital outlay budget of \$712 million. What is the state government doing to improve the Peninsula Development Road with this fund?

Mr LUCAS: That would be an issue that is very dear to the honourable member's heart. Steve Bredhauer was a wonderful advocate for the people of Cook, and I am delighted that someone who is just as wonderful an advocate in his short time here has taken over, because I know you see how important it is to be getting in there and fighting for people in far-north Queensland.

The Peninsula Development Road extends some 737 kilometres from Mareeba to the Weipa lease boundary and is the main access road on the Cape York Peninsula. It would be interesting to overlay Victoria against your electorate to give an idea of some of the issues that we have in relation to our roads network in Queensland.

Given the road's strategic importance in terms of defence, regional development and social justice, since 2000 the state has made a number of submissions to the Commonwealth seeking a declaration of the Peninsula Development Road between Lakeland and the Comalco lease boundary at Weipa as a road of national importance and financial assistance on a 50/50 federal state basis towards a \$165 million 20-year upgrade consistent with the PDR investment strategy developed by Main Roads in consultation with Cape York communities in 2000.

A road inspection involving federal and state ministerial and departmental officers from a number of government agencies also took place in November 2000. State government plans for the PDR include a low-cost seal and upgrade of minor drainage crossings over 10 years from 2001 for the full 524 kilometres of the Lakeland to Weipa section, followed by the strengthening of pavement over the next 10 years.

On 12 August 2002 Federal Minister Anderson declared the Lakeland-Weipa lease boundary section of the PDR a RONI and approved \$5 million matching funding over three years to 2004-05. Under our Smart State Building Fund initiative the Queensland government provided an extra \$6 million to accelerate upgrades to this critical Cape York link. It sought matching RONI funding from the Australia government in December 2003 and to date there has been no response.

The PDR does not form any part of the recently released AusLink National Transport Network, however local federal member for Leichhardt, Warren Entsch, has publicly suggested Commonwealth funds may be available. I would like to know where they are. If they are available I would like him to give them to us.

As part of the 2004-05 state budget \$8.9 million has been provided for capital upgrades to the PDR, namely: Lakeland to Laura—\$3.9 million to complete a \$7 million project to extend the bitumen seal south of Laura along a 7.3 kilometre section between the Laura River and Coalseam Creek; Laura to Coen—state funded upgrades worth \$2 million to this section include the sealing of a five kilometre section near Yarraden Station; sealing the section north of the Three Sisters and floodway improvements at Ryan's Dip; Coen to Weipa—some \$0.47 million to seal a section near the Telecom tower. In addition, some \$1.5 million is provided by the state government for routine maintenance of the PDR to ensure this link is maintained to a safe and serviceable standard.

The CHAIR: The time allocated for questions by government members has expired. I now call the member for Moggill.

Dr FLEGG: Minister, 63 per cent of the population of Queensland are in the south-east corner. As you said earlier, 80 per cent of the new arrivals are moving into the south-east corner. Last year at these estimates your predecessor said there has been a deliberate shift in funding in the roads area from south-east Queensland to regional Queensland. Main Roads have declined as a percentage of the capital budget anyway and capital spending on a regional basis in the south-east of Queensland has declined from 71 per cent in 1999-2000 to 59.5 per cent in the current budget. Minister, why won't your government give the residents of the growing south-east corner a fair go in the funding of roads?

Mr LUCAS: Unlike the Liberal Party, we are a party that exists outside the south-east corner. We actually have a commitment to people throughout Queensland. I would imagine that the figure you are quoting in relation to 1999-2000 would have been somewhat skewed by the expenditure on the Pacific Motorway. That would reflect that particular proportion at that point in time.

We govern for all of the state and we want to make sure that an appropriate level of expenditure accrues not only to the south-east corner but also to the rest of Queensland. The member for Cook has not come here thumping the table saying, 'I want the Pacific Motorway built on the Laura to Lakeland Road.' That is the standard that people in south-east Queensland have. He has not expected that. I am sure he would like to have that. We have to provide a balance when it comes to expenditure which I think is careful and appropriate.

I will just run through some of the things that we have announced in this budget in relation to south-east Queensland. We have got the Linkfield connection road; we have got work on the Pacific Motorway—the noise amelioration; the completion of the four-lane link between the Brisbane-Beenleigh

Road; the four-laning of Ross Street East on the Nerang-Broadbeach Road; Frank Street, Southport; the Sunshine Motorway-Sippy Downs interchange; the Sunshine Motorway interchange improvements at Mooloolaba; the New England Highway widening and rehabilitation between Cawdor Road and Reis Road; the New England Highway signalling of the intersection of Highfield Road; the Gladstone-Benaraby Road—that is not south-east Queensland so I will go to some other things. We have got the two-lane bypass from Bruce Highway to Old Gympie Road; stages 2 and 3 of the Caboolture bypass; four-laning from Robert Street to Stevens Street on the Gold Coast; Caloundra-Mooloolaba Road; the Beenleigh-Redland Bay Road; the Rosewood-Warrill View Road replacement of the timber bridge over Western Bridge; the Caloundra Road four-laning from Bruce Highway; the Mount Lindesay Highway, four-laning from Green Road to Rosia Road; Gold Coast-Springwood Road. We have work on the Redland Bay Road in the Redlands; we have the Moggill subarterial in your electorate; the Sunshine Motorway—and the member for Maroochydore acknowledged that before. We have \$120 million funding in relation to the Springfield extension.

Frankly, I think that the enormous increases in funding under this budget for what is happening in south-east Queensland is a wonderful good news story for south-east Queensland. I represent a south-east Queensland electorate as you do, but what I am not going to do is sell out the people of the parts of Queensland other than south-east Queensland. They do not even ask to have the Pacific Motorway built there, but they expect to have a reasonable standard of service and it is more expensive to build roads in rural and remote Queensland. If you want Queensland to be like Western Australia that is fine, but I do not want Queensland to be like Western Australia; I want people to live in those regions. That is why we have a significant commitment. I bet you would wish to have a Terry Mackenroth-style budget and these sorts of road outcomes in south-east Queensland because I think it is wonderful news.

Dr FLEGG: I refer the minister to a couple of local roads of importance to myself and the member for Caloundra, namely Caloundra Road and Moggill Road. Given that the Beattie government has promised to duplicate these roads over a number of years—in fact six years in a row the duplication for Caloundra Road has been pushed out and Moggill Road has actually had approved allocations unspent in most of the last six years—why have you promised to duplicate these roads and yet continually fail to deliver on your promise?

Mr LUCAS: First of all in relation to Caloundra Road, that is the major east-west corridor between the Bruce Highway and the southern end of the Sunshine Coast. The 4.3 kilometre section of Caloundra Road between the Bruce Highway and Pierce Avenue is currently two lanes and the remaining five kilometres to the Caloundra business centre is four. That currently carries 25,000 vehicles per day. With the ongoing residential and commercial development it is expected to be, on the two-lane section, about 40,000 by 2011. The 2003-04 to 2007-08 RIP includes an indicative allocation of \$51.5 million for the four-laning with construction programmed to start in 2007-08 with completion likely by 2010. Under our arterial road infrastructure package initiative this project is to be accelerated. Funding has been made available to complete planning and design by 2006 with construction starting in 2007 being completed in 2009. We have got a bring forward there in relation to that Caloundra Road and I am delighted that we can do that. That is about actually responding to growth. I am delighted that you are thankful for what we are doing. We do not expect thanks for it; that is what we are here to do. This is about actually better providing services into growth areas.

In relation to your electorate, I am looking at the RIP now. You are doing pretty well. The Moggill subarterial road, four-laning from Kilkivan Avenue to Pullenvale road, that is an indicative cost of \$16 million odd; Marshall Lane-Centenary on ramp, there is some significant indications in there as well. I will provide a copy of page 15 of the RIP that talks about some of the things that are happening in your electorate. We have a strong commitment to that and that is why you have some money in the budget. But we have to share our scarce resources. The whole thing about this current budget is we have been able to bring forward, through excellent financial management by the Treasurer, a number of our financial commitments and that has benefited your electorate as it has the Sunshine Coast.

Miss SIMPSON: I refer to the Main Roads Capital Statement and to those projects that are funded from the Smart State Building Fund. How much of the \$1.4 billion in this fund has been allocated to each of the capital projects identified in this Capital Statement as being funded under this program? I would be happy to take that on notice or you could table it today.

Mr LUCAS: We will provide you with a copy of that, no problem.

Miss SIMPSON: I refer to the strategic improvement summary for RoadTek in the MPS 2-56 and to the statement that RoadTek 'will also be reviewing the operations of areas that are exposed to a considerable drop off in work'. What areas are being referred to in the statement and what considerable drop off in work is being referred to?

Mr LUCAS: I will ask the Director-General to deal with that.

Mr Golding: Basically, our work forces belonging to RoadTek in south-west Queensland and in areas of central western Queensland traditionally have to be very flexible to maintain their employment by travelling long distances and being prepared to undertake a whole range of works.

Mr LUCAS: Which they do and I would like to thank them for that.

Mr Golding: The program has always recognised the importance of being able to provide them with a continuity of work. We balance that against the need to prioritise works to give the best value outcomes for Queenslanders from the road expenditure. Because of the increases in the budget over the next few years, we expect our ability to provide them with a continuity of work to improve on two accounts: one, the increased funding generally will enable us to bring up lower priority works because the higher ones will be funded with the extra funding, and that will allow areas such as central west and south-west to provide more work in their areas; and, secondly, I guess that they will need to support the private sector because the Roads Program is going to expand considerably over the next four and five years.

The example in central Queensland of remediation work around Mount Morgan is a very significant example where we are working closely with the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy to deliver a \$12 million program there. So we are actively looking at other avenues of working with Q-Build, with Queensland Rail, with DNRME to get a better synergy in terms of our joint work forces to be able to provide continuity of work for our people and better outcomes for the people of Queensland.

Mr LUCAS: Those RoadTek people in rural and remote Queensland are great workers and they want to work and we are about facilitating that for them. This is about us being smart in terms of looking for opportunities for them. We have a strong commitment to the work that they do, particularly in rural and remote Queensland.

Miss SIMPSON: I refer to your confirmation that the Tugun bypass was going to cost \$360 million, exactly the same as the western bypass.

Mr LUCAS: That is indicative.

Miss SIMPSON: Can you provide a breakdown of how the \$360 million for the eastern bypass was to be expended?

Mr LUCAS: We will be able to provide you with something in indicative terms. With any project I would be very surprised if I get a bill at the end of it for \$360,000,000. It will be about that figure. That is our best estimate of what it will cost. But, yes, sure.

Miss SIMPSON: I refer to the RoadTek report MPS 2-56 where it notes that RoadTek is reported as having a staff of 1,600 whereas last year the reported staffing level was 1,750. Will you please explain this reduction in jobs in the road building arm of Main Roads?

Mr LUCAS: I am told that that reflects numbers of staff that have left through voluntary early retirement through the work force renewal strategy and those staff numbers were predominantly in the south-east. The south-east corner, of course, is where there is a competitive market for road construction.

Miss SIMPSON: I refer to the performance statement for RoadTek, MPS 2-58, and to the plant utilisation statistics which indicate a reduction in utilisation of 10 per cent compared to last year's estimates. What is the reason for this reduction in utilisation of plant and I ask is this utilisation level sustainable?

Mr LUCAS: I am told that this is a result of slightly lower levels of work than anticipated and also some delays due to wet weather. I should say this as well though: that the Director-General indicated before some of the work that we are doing in relation to making sure that our RoadTek crews are fully and adequately utilised. It is always a balancing act if you have a commitment to having them in areas where there is not always the same level. In the south-east corner it is so big in terms of requirements that you can have people doing things all the time. In the private sector the market does not tend to fail. The private sector is quite active there as well.

In smaller communities you need to actually have a look for more opportunities. The dam remediation with DMR is about us being sensible with the utilisation of assets that belong to RoadTek.

The CHAIR: That concludes the examination of the estimates for the Department of Main Roads. Thank you, Minister, and thank you, advisers, for your attendance. The transcript of this part of the hearing will be available on the *Hansard* internet quick access web within two hours from now. The committee will now adjourn. The hearing will resume at 2.30 p.m. to examine the proposed expenditures for the portfolio of the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy.

Mr LUCAS: Can I thank the staff of my department, the Department of Main Roads. Can I also thank yourself and your committee members. I thank the shadow minister, the research director and his staff as well.

Miss SIMPSON: We thank the minister and his staff. We appreciate it.

Sitting suspended 1.30 p.m. to 2.31 p.m.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D—ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POLICY

In Attendance

Hon. E.A. Clark, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy

Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy

Dr W. Hoey, Director-General

Mr M. Tolhurst, Assistant Director-General

Ms J. Stone, Executive Director, Corporate & Executive Services

Mr B. Elder, Director, Finance and Administration Branch

Mr T. Dreise, Executive Director, Strategic Partnerships

The CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I welcome ladies and gentlemen to the hearing. I am Robert Poole, the member for Gaven and chair of the committee. My fellow committee members are: Mr Ted Malone, the member for Mirani and Deputy Chair; Mrs Bonny Barry, the member for Aspley; Mr Jason O'Brien, the member for Cook; Miss Fiona Simpson, the member for Maroochydore; Mrs Christine Smith, the member for Burleigh; and Mr Peter Wellington, the member for Nicklin.

The next portfolio to be examined relates to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. The committee has given leave for non-committee members to ask the minister questions. In this regard, Mr Vaughan Johnson MP, the member for Gregory, will be participating in the hearing this afternoon. I remind the committee and minister that the time limit for questions is one minute and for answers three minutes. A bell will ring once 15 seconds before the end of these time limits and twice when the time has expired. I will allow more time for answers if the questioner consents. The sessional orders require that at least half the time for questions be allotted to non-government members. Government and non-government members of the committee will take turns at asking questions in blocks lasting approximately 20 minutes commencing with the non-government members.

In relation to media coverage of today's hearing, the committee has resolved that video coverage without sound and still photographs are allowed only during the opening statements and at the commencement of proceedings after each change of department. For the benefit of *Hansard*, I ask advisers to the minister to identify themselves before they speak.

I remind all those participating in the hearing today that these proceedings are similar to parliament to the extent that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. Standing order 195 provides that strangers to the parliament may be admitted or excluded from the hearing at the pleasure of the committee. If anyone attending today's hearing has a mobile phone or a pager please switch it off while in the chamber so as not to interrupt proceedings.

The time allotted to the portfolio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy is one hour and 30 minutes. I declare the proposed expenditure for the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister you have five minutes to make your opening statement.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Mr Chairman and members of the committee, I am pleased to be here today as the minister for the stand alone portfolio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. This is a wonderful opportunity for the Queensland government to address the many issues which impact on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We are doing this through an innovative shift in approach.

This department now has policy as its focus rather than service delivery. This is recognition of the fact that experts in housing are the best officers to deal with housing issues, experts in health are best qualified to come up with health solutions and experts in child safety can deliver the best protection for children. But to ensure these measures are not developed in isolation, a whole-of-government approach is being coordinated through this department.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain among the most vulnerable people in our nation. Their education, career prospects, health and living standards are still below that of other Australians. By harnessing and coordinating the skills of not only other state agencies but also other levels of government we can ensure services are targeted where they are needed most and there is no waste of resources.

The 2004-05 core budget of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy is \$54 million. The administrative responsibility for Aboriginal and Island councils has been transferred to

the Department of Local Government and Planning, with a budget of \$16.6 million for the community governance improvement strategy. This strategy will help Aboriginal councils implement improved financial management, administration and accountability measures as they move towards becoming shire councils. A green paper on the review of Torres Strait Islander community governance will be completed later this year.

DATSIP's \$54.7 million in funding is in addition to the many millions of dollars spent on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders as an intrinsic part of the state budget. The vision of our department is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders to have their cultures affirmed, heritage sustained and the same prospects for their health, prosperity and quality of life as all Queenslanders.

An integrated framework to achieve this vision, Partnerships Queensland, is currently being developed which will tie in the very important strategies already working changes in Queensland. This includes the state government's long-term planning framework, the 10-year partnership and the landmark response to the Cape York Justice Study—*Meeting Challenges, Making Choices*.

The past year has been a time of challenge and of change in the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. Following Justice Fitzgerald's Cape York Justice Study in late 2001, the Beattie government resolved something must be done to stop the cycle of violence in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Together with the community justice groups we have taken the difficult step of implementing alcohol management plans in 17 of these communities. Already in some communities these plans are showing signs of making a difference to the lives of women and children. We are now concentrating on a range of complementary initiatives to tackle surrounding issues and identify any areas which need further support.

These major initiatives are in addition to the many day-to-day success stories of this department. In the past year millions have been spent on diversionary centres, the establishment and operation of community justice groups across the state, funding for cultural and traditional celebrations, reparation of wages and researching the family histories of people separated from their homelands. This government is committed to moving forward into a strong future for all Queenslanders.

Mr Chairman, I would like to introduce the people at the table with me. On my left is the Director-General of the department, Dr Warren Hoey, and Director, Finance and Administration, Bernie Elder. To my right is the Assistant Director General, Michael Tolhurst, and Executive Director, Corporate and Executive Services, Janet Stone.

The CHAIR: The first round of questions is from non-government members.

Mr JOHNSON: Minister, I refer you to the implementation of the alcohol management plans on page 2 of the MPS and note that the intentions of these plans were to empower community justice groups to develop their own plans. Minister, can you indicate whether the plans have been implemented. Were the plans developed by the individual group justice groups?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Certainly. I think that that is a really important question. As you know, the first part of the Fitzgerald report was the implementation of the plans and then moving forward. This has been done in partnership with the community justice groups. It is important to note at the outset that, without the morale and ethical ownership of these plans by the communities, you face difficulties. That is where the empowerment comes through with the community justice groups.

Plans have been completed in 16 of the 19 *Meeting Challenges, Making Choices* communities. The three remaining communities—Mornington Island, Hope Vale and Palm Island—are expected to make the transition to community justices groups by the end of 2005.

Alcohol management plans have been completed and alcohol restrictions are in place in 17 communities: Aurukun, Napranum, Lockhart River, Wujal Wujal, Kowanyama, Pormpuraaw, Yarrabah, Doomadgee, Mornington Island, Woorabinda, Mapoon, Hope Vale and the five northern peninsula area communities—Bamaga, Injinoo, Seisia, Umagico, and New Mapoon. With the exception of Aurukun, Doomadgee and Napranum, all of these restrictions commenced during the 2003-04 period. It is really important to note how well they are doing at the moment. A lot of people have been talking of anecdotal data. It is important that we look at evidence-based data. That is coming through at the moment.

Police offender data shows that, since the introduction of alcohol restrictions in the communities of Aurukun, Doomadgee, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mornington Island, Napranum, Pormpuraaw, Woorabinda, Wujal Wujal and Yarrabah there has been a 10.9 per cent reduction in monthly average alcohol related offences and a 12.3 per cent reduction in monthly average offences against persons.

Getting back to the community justice groups that Vaughan was talking about, I point out that it has happened in partnership with them. Apart from anything, I would like to acknowledge the work that they do within their communities. Without that partnership it would be a lot harder. With anything that is new that is implemented there are going to be those who stand outside and say that they do not want it. For the most part, the community justice groups have worked really well in partnership.

Mr JOHNSON: I refer again to the implementation of the alcohol management plans referred to on page 2 of the MPS and note that the loopholes in relation to the Lockhart River airport are to be addressed in amending legislation. Do you believe that it was always intended by the plan for the carriage of alcohol on an aircraft landing at that airport or any other airport to be illegal? Do you support legislation that will permit people to be charged for doing so?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: You are referring to the issue at Lockhart River. The new measures as a result of the findings will come through the liquor licensing and police legislation. It has no bearing on our department. In terms of the loophole—if one wants to call it a loophole; I do not know—the police found that there was not enough evidence in Lockhart which is why it has been reviewed and will go back to the drawing board.

The Crime and Misconduct Commission conducted an investigation into allegations of official misconduct concerning the wine. They did not examine whether there had been any offence under the Liquor Act 1992 as this was a matter for the Queensland Police Service to investigate. The Crime and Misconduct Commission accepted the Commissioner of Police's finding that there was no offence committed under the Liquor Act. The Crime and Misconduct Commission found that all allegations against me, my policy advisor and the Director-General of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy were unsubstantiated and there was no political interference. I will hand over to my Assistant Director-General to follow-up on that question, if that is okay.

Mr Tolhurst: I will follow-up on the minister's comments. The provision that I think you refer to Mr Johnson relates to the provisions of the Liquor Act and they sought clarity of issues that arose in respect of that piece of legislation. I do not want to go into the details of it because it is not our legislation but there are also issues in terms of permits on which they are seeking clarity.

I think it was anticipated when the legislation was developed that there would be during the course of its implementation the potential for some variations to that legislation after it had the opportunity to be put in place and utilised during the course of the alcohol management program roll-out. Perhaps I can conclude there.

Mr JOHNSON: Thank you, Minister and Mr Tolhurst. Minister, I refer you to the Tony Fitzgerald Cape York Justice Study where he put together a list of recommendations, bearing in mind that our colleague the member for Cook, Jason O'Brien, on 29 March urged the Premier to renegotiate the unpopular grog laws on several remote Cape York Peninsula communities. Mr Fitzgerald made recommendations about rehab centres, justice groups, et cetera. How many of the Fitzgerald Cape York justice recommendations have been implemented? Do you believe that the implementation of this program to date is working?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Yes. There are a lot of questions there.

Mr JOHNSON: Not really.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: It is all about—

Mr JOHNSON: We are referring there, Minister, to the—

The CHAIR: Order! You have asked your question.

Mr JOHNSON: Yes, but I am just—

The CHAIR: Order! Member for Gregory!

Ms LIDDY CLARK: In relation to the Fitzgerald study, the first area of the Fitzgerald study was the implementation of alcohol management—that is, to put in alcohol restrictions—and that has been done. With reference to the member for Cook, the member for Cook is a fantastic member for that area.

Mr JOHNSON: I did not say that he was not.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Also he has to work with his constituency, and there are going to be those people, as I said before, who are going to support a restriction and those people who are not. As the member for that area, it is incumbent upon him to listen to everybody and to advocate on their behalf. You know as a member yourself, Vaughan, that that is what you do. Given that the expertise in this area has been one of our executive directors, and that is Tony Dreise, I would ask Tony if he would comment.

Mr Dreise: In addition to the restrictions that the government has put in place, there is a range of demand strategies, as we refer to them, which complement the restrictions that have been put in place. These are consistent with the Cape York substance abuse strategy and the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drug strategy. The Queensland Health portfolio has just announced \$4 million to support alcohol demand initiatives in the Cape. This is on top of initiatives falling out of the negotiation tables which are occurring in each community. A range of support initiatives has been put in place at the local level through the negotiation table process, including family and community support initiatives and drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs. In Queensland Health's announcement of \$4 million, there will be additional specialist drug and rehabilitation workers who will be recruited and there will be a major work force development initiative targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers. So they

provide some examples of the types of complementary initiatives to the supply restrictions that the government has put in place.

Mr JOHNSON: Minister, I refer to the answer to non-government question on notice No. 6 in which I asked would the Townsville Happy Valley shelter be subject to alcohol restrictions. Although you confirmed that there were no facilities being provided for rehabilitation associated with alcohol or drug rehabilitation, you failed to answer the question regarding alcohol restrictions. Minister, will you now advise the committee if alcohol is going to apply to this facility and, if not, why not?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: As we all know, Happy Valley has been both a permanent and temporary home for Aboriginal people over the last 50 years. Whenever you are putting together something or creating a new space or supporting a space that is already there and adding infrastructure like weather shelters, toilets, laundry and shower facilities, it is not just us dictating what happens there. There is a committee that gets together and talks which has to have traditional owners on it, council members and government reps. There are a lot of people involved. I have to say that at the moment there is no actual direct answer for you on that. I am happy to take it on notice again, but it is under discussion. Nothing has been decided. A lot is happening on Happy Valley. The facilities are there to improve the amenity of the site for both the current and future residents, but they have not come to a conclusion as yet as to whether it will be a wet area or a dry area. I cannot dictate that. That is something again that has to come through the consultation process with all of the parties involved, and hopefully that is going to come to fruition very soon.

The importance of the provision of support services to Happy Valley is recognised and agreement was reached for the provision of outreach services at the site with a number of the agencies. These include a government funded case management service to be operated by St Luke's Nursing Service; visiting medical services by both St Luke's and the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service; outreach visits, which are really important; support by alcohol, tobacco and other drug counsellors from Queensland Health; and regular transportation by Community Patrol, which is also another fantastic initiative. Other programs such as a mobile community based detoxification service and a breakfast program are also under discussion. I would like to hand over to my director-general to continue to discuss that.

Dr Hoey: Thank you, Minister. The honourable member would appreciate that, as the minister said, this is a work in progress and at the moment the Director-General of Premier and Cabinet is leading a task force in which we are involved on the ground. The issues are complex and even without alcohol they involve some risk in making sure that services provided to people who use those Happy Valley facilities are timely and minimise the risk to men, women and children both young and old. So we are an active participant in that. That is an issue that is very much on the table at the moment, but we will be attempting to ensure that the outcome of a healthy and safe life for all of those people is foremost in our minds when we make those decisions.

Mr JOHNSON: Thank you, Dr Hoey. Minister, I refer to page 2 of the MPS and the second last paragraph under 'Meeting Challenges, Making Choices' which refers to the review of community alcohol management plans, liquor amendment regulations and associated alcohol management issues to commence 12 months after the start of each regulation. Can you please provide to the committee the school attendance rates for each community with an alcohol management plan?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: I would like to take that one on notice. There is a whole heap of things that you want indicated there. I am very happy to do that, and I am sure that we can do that now and have it done before the end of this session. I am quite happy to talk about the alcohol management plans, though.

Mr JOHNSON: I am happy with that. Minister, I refer to the output statement for community development and note that the number of grants to be administered is estimated to increase by 10 in the next year. What are these new grants in relation to?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: I have 2003-04. We might have to take that one on notice, too.

Mr JOHNSON: No problem, Minister.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: You just want to get more questions in. That is why you are doing it, aren't you?

Mr JOHNSON: No, I do not want more questions. I am as interested in this as you are, and I want outcomes, too.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Excellent.

Mr JOHNSON: Recently we heard reports of people in the gulf region making their own liquor with home-brew kits. The state government still owns stores in many of these communities. How does the state—

The CHAIR: Order! You are actually making a statement. Could you ask a question please, member for Gregory.

Mr JOHNSON: Righto, Mr Chairman. You are getting stropo now. The state government still owns stores in many of these communities. How does the state government justify the prices charged when they are up to three to four times the price in these stores than any other regional centre around Queensland?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: I can actually say now that none of the DATSIP owned stores actually sell home-brew kits and would not sell home-brew kits. I think that there is an issue with home brew in two communities, the major one being Mornington Island. The store there is run by a board—by a committee—and we are in discussions there. Of course, we can legislate against home brew. In fact, that has been talked about at the cabinet level—that is, to introduce that legislation. For my mind, again going back to the moral and ethical ownership of alcohol and various addictions, it would be great if we did not have to legislate and if the communities could actually take control and see that it would be best not to. As I said, at the moment there are only two communities where there is an issue, with Mornington being the most prevalent. So I am hoping that we do not have to legislate, and we are in discussions with Mornington at the moment. But of course it is not something that you would want to get around.

As far as the pricings are concerned in the DATSIP stores, I have to say that it is inexcusable if there are high prices on staple diet things such as bread and milk. I will not support that in any of our stores. It has happened. It has come to my attention. I have addressed it. It is incorrigible for that to happen. Just because an area is isolated does not mean that they have to pay high prices for staple goods. That is so not right and something that I am completely against. We retain ownership of six retail stores, and they are at Doomadgee, Lockhart River, Woorabinda, Palm Island, Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw. Ultimately, the stores are not there just to make a profit. In fact, their operating outcomes are normally at a loss. But you do not put a store in a remote community just to make money; you put a store in a community so that people have access to the basic staples. We are addressing that. But going through the stores and their operating profit and loss, there is more of a loss than anything else.

We are going to spend \$1 million on the refurbishment of the six retail stores and on the houses. The houses are an essential element in attracting staff of course to these remote locations. It should be noted that the retail stores are intended to be a not-for-profit enterprise and as such are managed with the aim of ensuring healthy foods are accessible for residents in these communities at the best possible price—something, Vaughan, I will be vigilant about.

The CHAIR: Order! The time allocated for questions by non-government members has expired.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, I refer to page 17 of the MPS which foreshadows the community development output performance in that the department will be reviewing the alcohol restrictions introduced in the MCMC communities. Can the minister provide the committee with further information on the role that will be undertaken by the department in these reviews? How will the department be engaging with community members to ensure that their views and input are considered?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Certainly, and I think it is really important—you are right—that we actually highlight engaging with community members to ensure that their views and input are considered. That is hugely important. The government has a long-term commitment in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to overcome the scourge of alcohol and violence that these people in these communities live with on a daily basis. Since January 2003, the government has implemented alcohol restrictions, as I have said, in 17 of the 19 MCMC communities. The two remaining communities—Palm Island and Cherbourg—are currently working on the best way to improve alcohol related issues in their local areas.

The Cherbourg community justice group has decided to focus on law and justice issues and the use of dry place declarations in place of restricted areas covering all public places in the community. Palm Island is yet to finalise its alcohol management plan. The earliest the Palm Island plan could be expected to be finalised is at the end of August 2004.

As part of our commitment, the government has started a formal program to review the AMPs. For 2004-05, \$220,000 has been allocated for this process. Each community's alcohol restrictions will be reviewed after the restrictions have been in place for 12 months. It is important to allow enough time to adequately gauge the effects of those restrictions on important indicators such as health, crime rates, hospitalisation rates, instances of domestic violence and school attendance rates. The review schedule is as follows: June to September 2004, Aurukun, Napranum and Doomadgee; November 2004 to March 2005, Woorabinda, Wujal Wujal, Lockhart River, Mornington Island, Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw; March to June 2005, Yarrabah, Mapoon, Hope Vale, the northern peninsula communities of Bamaga, Injinoo, Seisia, New Mapoon and Umagico; July to September 2005, Palm Island and Cherbourg.

A key aspect of each review is the involvement of community members in the process, who can provide essential feedback about the on-the-ground impact of restrictions. Mr Col Dylan, our strategic indigenous advisor, was appointed a year ago to advise community justice groups on implementing alcohol management plans and he is assisting in the review process. Police offender data shows that since the introduction of alcohol restrictions in the communities of Aurukun, Doomadgee, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mornington Island, Napranum, Pormpuraaw, Woorabinda, Wujal Wujal and Yarrabah, there has been a 10.9 per cent reduction in monthly average alcohol-related offences and a 12.3 per

cent reduction in monthly average offences against the person. The latest figures to April 2004 from Aurukun, the first community to implement an alcohol management plan, indicate that there has been a 71 per cent reduction.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, I refer you to page 11 of the MPS, which states that a key priority of the negotiation table process in 2004-05 will be the introduction of measures to reduce the demand for alcohol in DOGIT communities. Can you inform the committee of the complementary initiatives that you will be putting in place to support and improve the services to members of those communities?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Since the Cape York Justice Study in 2001, the state government has adopted a whole-of-government approach to working with indigenous communities to ease the cycle of violence and poor health. In partnership with community justice groups, we have taken the difficult but necessary step of introducing alcohol management plans to manage the supply of alcohol in 17 communities in the Cape York and the Gulf. I am pleased to announce that the Queensland government has been successful in securing federal funding of \$3.26 million to further its campaign against alcohol and substance abuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The funding will go towards initiatives to deal with substance abuse and will deliver intervention programs and further develop outstations.

If alcohol management programs are to continue their success in the long-term, those communities need sustained support. The range of measures that are already in place were detailed in the recent update to cabinet on the MCMC initiative. This \$3.26 million in federal funding through the Council of Australian Governments for the trial in Cape York shows that the state and federal governments can work together to improve the quality of life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The details of the strategy are being coordinated via a cross-government domain working group, with representatives from Queensland Health, the Queensland Police Service, and the departments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy, communities, housing, education and training. The first stage of the program will begin in this financial year.

The \$1.76 million from the Queensland illicit drug diversion initiative will be used for a range of initiatives to meet five specific goals: skilling people to make better lifestyle choices, strengthening families to deal with substance abuse, delivering intervention and support for young people and adults who are experiencing substance misuse harm, providing informed choices and minimising risks, and improving the coordination of services and strategies. Funds of \$1.5 million from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services will be used to further develop outstations where intervention and diversion activities and support will be available to help people with substance abuse problems. Activities such as getting back to country will be a part of this program.

These projects will be achieved within a coordinated whole-of-government approach to ensure that the right initiatives are going ahead in the places where they are needed most. A range of community support initiatives are currently being funded by different agencies in response to demand for alcohol and other substances, and the department's strategy will be designed to complement these. The Department of Communities has funded four healing centres in Cape York and Torres Strait at a cost of \$1.39 million. This service will deliver innovative and appropriate responses to families and children who are affected by violence by developing and implementing traditional therapeutic responses. The Department of Communities also has a crisis accommodation program.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, I refer you to page 16 of the MPS and to the communication campaign that was implemented in partnership with the Liquor Licensing Division and the QPS around alcohol management plans. Recently, there has been a lot of media coverage about people travelling into communities where alcohol management plans have been implemented. What is the government doing to communicate information to the general public about alcohol restrictions and subsequent penalties?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Thanks, Jason. This is a really important question. I would like everybody here to note that 85 per cent of the Cape is not restricted. It is a little known fact—and one that we need to get out there—that 85 per cent of the Cape is not restricted. However, the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, in partnership with the Liquor Licensing Division, the Department of Tourism and Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development and the Queensland Police Service has implemented a dedicated communication campaign to inform the public about the introduction of alcohol restrictions in indigenous communities. The communication campaign aims to raise awareness of the restrictions, to inform people of the purpose of the laws and to stop sly-grogging from destroying families, communities and cultures.

The department invested \$160,000 into communication activities during 2003-04. For example, a telephone information line began on 20 November 2003 which provides travellers and local residents with access to specific details on alcohol restrictions. That is a 1300 number and it is promoted through advertising in brochures and on the web. Detailed maps showing the boundaries of restricted areas are produced for each community. They are distributed by email to key stakeholders and in hard copy to local information points such as police stations and tourism information centres. Maps were first published in September 2003 and are produced on an ongoing basis. A series of general and community specific brochures, which primarily target travellers, are distributed to key information points

such as police stations and tourist information centres. Brochures were first published in August 2003 and are produced on an ongoing basis. There is a web site which provides specific details of restrictions, including maps of restricted areas as well as background information on the alcohol management program. The web site was first published in July 2003 and is regularly updated. The site is promoted through advertising in brochures and links from other web sites.

A monthly update on alcohol restrictions is sent to external stakeholders such as Tourism Queensland, the Local Government Association of Queensland and Sunfish for distribution through their networks. Media releases are distributed prior to restrictions being introduced. Community messages outlining what, where and when restrictions apply to a particular community are distributed via the department's regional officers to regional colleagues who may work in or near those communities.

Between January and June 2004, advertising was placed in specialist travel publications, including RACQ's *The Road Ahead*, *Four-Wheel Drive* monthly, *Fish & Boat*, *Bush & Beach*, and *The Wanderer*. Advertising space has also been booked during July to September 2004 with *Caravanning Australia*, *Outdoor* and *The Road Ahead*. It is ongoing and it needs to be ongoing.

Mr O'BRIEN: Do you need an extension of time?

The CHAIR: Thanks, Jason. Minister, if you want to, you can ask the questioner if they would like to hear the longer version of your answer. I call on the member for Aspley.

Ms BARRY: Minister, thank you for your time and thank you to your staff, in particular. I want to talk about the community volunteers program. I refer you to page 10 of the MPS and the Indigenous Community Volunteers program. In 2003-04, this program allowed six volunteers to work on six projects in indigenous communities. Minister, can you provide the committee with more information on what the program has achieved in the last 12 months to build capacity within indigenous communities and, furthermore, what is being done to align the volunteers program with key government priorities in the *Meeting Challenges, Making Choices* communities?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Thanks, Bonny. This is another very important question about volunteers, and it is a great program. It is about capacity building and that is hugely important. Building capacity is a part of moving forward.

In 2003-04, the department provided \$20,000 to support the Indigenous Community Volunteers program. This represents half of the total Queensland government contribution of \$40,000. The departments of the Premier and Cabinet, Primary Industries, State Development and Innovation, and Queensland Health each contributed \$5,000. The Indigenous Community Volunteers program operates a national program which involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations requesting skilled volunteers. The volunteers work on projects selected by indigenous organisations to teach the skills needed by each particular organisation. The purpose of the \$40,000 grant was to provide additional volunteer placements in communities and organisations across Queensland. Priority was given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities identified under the government's MCMC strategy as those most in need.

The feedback from indigenous community volunteer representatives has been encouraging, with funding used to assist a number of communities. I would like to highlight a couple of those. For example, an ICVP volunteer has been assisting the Badjubulla Aboriginal Corporation at Cardwell with financial and project management. As a newly formed corporation, the board of Badjubulla station has required professional assistance around issues of corporate governance and economic development. The volunteer, with a background in business management and law, has provided—and continues to provide—mentoring, guidance and advice to the board and is transferring skills on aspects of corporate governance and financial issues. Business at the station is now looking promising. There are economic ventures in the pipeline and a stable board of management. According to the board, the assistance and advice provided by the volunteer has significantly contributed to this positive change.

I would also like to highlight the Erub Island Council in the Torres Strait, which has been involved in this valuable program. The island is a volcanic and hilly place that has been stripped of its vegetation and lost some of its native flora and fauna. A request was lodged by the community to begin a tree planting program and for a volunteer to assist in this process. The anticipated long-term outcome is to maintain the program and to regenerate native tree growth on the island. The volunteer has been transferring vital skills in seed collection, tree planting and how to deal with the effects of erosion.

Another positive story to emerge from this program is the Gangali Aboriginal community, a newly incorporated organisation which is located about 22 kilometres south of Townsville. The organisation is energetically pursuing various business opportunities, including aquaculture and tourism.

In 2004-05, the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy will explore opportunities to increase the effectiveness of indigenous community volunteers in skills transfer by endeavouring to link its operation in Queensland to other capacity building activities. Hugely important!

Ms BARRY: I particularly want to talk about the women's task force on violence. At page 11 of the MPS it notes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence. This was

chaired by Boni Robertson and was established in 1998 and released its report the following year. Can you please inform the committee as to what the Queensland government is doing to progress the recommendations made in this report?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence was established in late 1998. The task force was made up of 50 indigenous women, who represented communities throughout Queensland. Boni Robertson was the chairman. In December 1999, the task force released the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence report—notably, 'the report'. The Queensland government responded in May 2000 in the Queensland government's response to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence report, *The First Step*. A second response to the report of the task force, *The Next Step*, was provided in December 2000. It reported on whole-of-government activity in implementing the recommendations of the task force. In 2003, a whole-of-government progress report on the implementation of the report's recommendations, *Tracking Steps 2004*, was coordinated and drafted by the department. A report documenting the consultation outputs and outcomes is currently being finalised.

The development and implementation of a family violence agreement is a key result area for the government's 10-year partnership agenda. The family violence agreement is a whole-of-government approach to reducing indigenous family violence. Consultation on the draft agreement took place between September 2003 and November 2003 with a series of 13 workshops with stakeholders including indigenous and non-indigenous community organisations, relevant state government departments, community leaders and elders. Consultation material was also posted on the DATSIP web site for public information and comment. Material included the draft family violence agreement, a summary agreement with a feedback form and a frequently asked questions information sheet.

The development of the family violence action plan is being progressed through an interdepartmental family violence working group, coordinated by the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, with consultation data being used to inform its development. That is expected to be finalised this year. The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy's initiatives include an integrated policy framework—Partnerships Queensland—and it is currently being developed. It will provide the policy direction for encouragement between the Queensland government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. The government's response to the Cape York Justice Study—MCMC—incorporates themes of the report and enhances the government's response to the report's recommendations, particularly in regard to alcohol management.

The Queensland government suicide prevention strategy 2003-08 has been developed to incorporate a whole-of-life approach to suicide prevention. The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy is working with other agencies in the development of responses and strategies to address family violence. I am very happy to give you continued updates on that, Bonny, because I know how important it is.

Ms BARRY: Thank you very much. I want to talk about the regional homelessness blueprint. In 2002, a number of key government ministers travelled to Townsville to address the issues of concern around public drunkenness and homelessness in the city. Can you advise the committee of your department's progress in coordinating government implementation of the regional homelessness blueprint for Townsville? Specifically can you inform the committee as to how the Queensland government's Smart State Building Fund is supporting the implementation of the blueprint?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: For 2003-04, \$100,000 was allocated to fund key actions under the regional blueprint for Townsville. A range of initiatives to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness has been implemented in Townsville and since early 2002-03 a joint management group has been established in Townsville. Membership includes representatives from the Townsville City Council; the Queensland government through the Hon. Mike Reynolds, the Minister for Child Safety; key stakeholder government agencies, including Dr Leo Keliher, the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet; and two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders. Legislative changes have been made to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act Queensland 2000 and the Vagrants, Gaming and Other Offences Act 1931 to provide police with additional powers and options when dealing with the instances of drunkenness and antisocial behaviour in public spaces.

To further enhance these changes, in April the Premier announced that Dr Leo Keliher, Queensland's most senior and authoritative public servant, would be the champion to coordinate a top-level Queensland government response to Townsville's public drunkenness issue. Dr Keliher's role will be modelled on the champions working with remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities such as Palm Island. This is a fantastic initiative. These champions are senior Queensland government officers who help communities cut through red tap and navigate the complexities of the bureaucracy so that the community's needs can be met more quickly and more effectively.

The CHAIR: The time allocated for questions by government members has expired.

Mr JOHNSON: Minister, there appears to be an exodus from many of the Aboriginal communities around the state since the alcohol management plans were put in place. It appears that many of these people are relocating to places like Mount Isa and Cairns to access alcohol. I also notice a relocation of

Aboriginal families and Aboriginal people from Woorabinda to places like Longreach, Barcaldine and Blackall. This seems to be out of relativity to their place of connection. I ask you today: is this government policy for this relocation program? Why are these people descending on these places?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: I think that a lot of that is anecdotal evidence. It is not actually evidence based data that you possibly are referring to. As we know, the Aboriginal people and the Torres Strait Islander people are the most reviewed culture in the world. The reviews are constant. One thing that we have not looked at, of course, is migration. I think that it is anecdotal to say that migration is happening because of alcohol restrictions. In fact, in some of the areas in which we are doing some research, the migration is not alcohol restrictions related; it is actually related to medical reasons or visiting families. But it is certainly something that we will keep an eye on. I would have to say that, at the moment, I think you are referring to anecdotal evidence.

Due to the lack of data, there is no evidence to substantiate a causal link between the introduction of the alcohol restrictions and the displacement of indigenous Queenslanders from their communities. A survey about homelessness undertaken by my department's north Queensland and far-north Queensland regional offices further indicates that there is no causal link between people from indigenous communities migrating to live in public places in Townsville and Cairns and the introduction of alcohol management plans in surrounding communities. There is no information available about migration from indigenous communities to Mount Isa, but anecdotal evidence from the west Queensland regional office suggests that there is no causal link between population displacement and the alcohol management program.

As I said, there are so many reviews being done on indigenous people, but the one that I really want to look into—and it is not due to alcohol—is that of migration and for what reasons there is migration.

Mr JOHNSON: When you look at Woorabinda to Longreach, it is hard to see the relativity there.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Yes. As I said, whether it is to do with alcohol is anecdotal. But migration itself, I think, will be a really, really interesting research project and something that I would be very interested in. The Townsville survey on homelessness was conducted over a two-week period by community members who work with homeless people on a daily basis. It was released in May of this year. The survey found that 62.5 per cent of respondents, which is about 40 people, had lived in Townsville for longer than 10 years and only five respondents had lived there for less than 12 months. A clear majority—70.3 per cent—came from Palm Island, where the AMP has not been approved and the relevant legislation enacted. So there are no restrictions there to actually make them do that.

The Cairns survey was conducted in November 2003. The survey investigated community of origin and how long respondents had lived in Cairns. At the time of the survey, AMPs were in place at Aurukun, Napranum, Lockhart River and Wujal Wujal. Of the 68 persons who completed surveys a clear majority of respondents came from Lockhart River. Only one person came from Aurukun and four were from Napranum. However, a large percentage of indigenous people from Lockhart River is an historical trend and, as I said, not actually related to restrictions.

The 2003 survey results were consistent with the results of the August 2002 survey on homelessness, which reflected that, of 74 people who were residing in public places around Cairns, 22 were from Lockhart River. The August 2002 survey was conducted well before any of the AMPs were introduced. Further anecdotal information provided by the state based outreach workers in Cairns indicates that the AMPs are not a strong factor influencing people who are coming to Cairns. But that is certainly something that we will look at.

Mr JOHNSON: I refer to your answer to non-government question on notice No. 1 and in particular to the audit of financial practices which found that there were areas identified where improvements could be made. Can you inform the committee what issues were identified and what changes were implemented? In the interests of accountability, will you make this report public to the committee?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: The director-general would love to do this.

Mr Hoey: Thank you, Minister. The honourable member would appreciate that I might run out of time if I go through all of this. I will raise some of the issues, but I am happy to provide additional detail. You have not specified which, so I have in front of me information that has some level of detail about the various audit findings. For instance, in relation to the human resource management audit that was done across the department, there were areas identified for improvements such as employees' knowledge of their conditions of employment. That was easily rectified through providing them with that information and checking that they understood that. In relation to induction processes for new employees, we place great store in that. People need to know and understand their roles quite clearly—that is a good supervisory practice that we practise—and simple things such as management of work times and so on, how you fill in your time sheets, apply for leave and that type of thing.

We also place great store in financial management practices. There were some areas for improvements. In some cases we needed some better financial monitoring. That has been put in place

through additional training and checking on that. At a low level, a better security for portable and attractive items—things like that—and making sure that they are kept under lock and key. This is at a fairly low level, as you would appreciate.

There were audits looking at conditions of employment, assignment of responsibilities and accountabilities for staff in a team, the management of hours of work and related entitlements—those types of things. The employment of individuals, a clarification of their role, making sure that their skills are up to speed, making sure that checking is done of various records, whether they be human resource records, or financial records, making sure that forms are filled in for attendance and leave are a normal part of an audit. The audit goes through and notifies me of everything that requires some improvement. We take action on all of that. All of this has been brought to my attention. None of it is regarded as high risk; it is all very low risk.

Mr JOHNSON: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Just before you continue, were you going to give any information on notice?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: No, I was not. We have just got some information on the question that Mr Johnson asked.

Mr JOHNSON: Will you remove the CEOs of these communities who do not conform with government policy and uphold their responsibility in the execution of their financial obligations, for example, audits on time and, in real terms, the upholding of the tradition of transparency and accountability as per government policy?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Will I remove the CEOs?

Mr JOHNSON: Will you remove those CEOs from those communities who do not responsibly manage those communities?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: No, I will not, because it is the responsibility of the Department of Local Government and Planning.

Mr JOHNSON: Right. In an answer to a question in the last bracket of questions I asked, you made reference to the fact that the retail stores were not for profit. Whilst I agree with that, why does the government not run these stores at a non-profit and give the nursing mothers free formula, milk and baby food for infant children? Remember, we are talking here about less than three per cent of the child population of Queensland, and probably a disadvantaged less than three per cent.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: I do not know why we do not do that and how we can do that. There has to be some form of money making to make the stores survive and exist and all of that. I would have to say that the ownership of the DATSIP stores will probably move into the realm of community ownership and, therefore, it will be under their jurisdiction.

Having said that, that is probably a year or so away for that to happen. As you said, it is really important that the mothers and the children are looked after. Maybe we need to find an entrepreneur or a philanthropist to come in and support those notions. Maybe we work in partnership with philanthropists. That is what we need to do. You cannot just run a store and not get payment for things. It just does not work that way. But I understand your concern. They do not work on a for-profit basis. We try to get as much staple food and fresh food as we possibly can. Sometimes in the remote areas that is quite tough, but let us look at issues such as powdered milk and babies milk. I will ask the director-general if he would like to add to that.

Dr Hoey: The honourable member has raised a couple of important issues. One is the issue of profit. They are not run for profit, although there have been instances where people have complained about prices and the minister has acted very promptly. You have rightly pointed out the importance of nutrition to these communities, particularly to nursing mothers and young people. That is particularly important in indigenous communities. From work that is being done in Queensland and indeed around Australia we know of the importance of nutrition, particularly early nutrition—nutrition for pregnant women, young babies and young children—in terms of their lifetime prospects. That is the sort of thing we will keep in mind during this process of transferring the retail stores to other ownership. The minister is in the process of considering the criteria by which that might happen. Clearly, ability to make a profit might be one of many, but issues such as nutrition and the wellbeing of the community are things that would be very much at the forefront, because of its significant impact on the community.

Mr WELLINGTON: Minister, it is great to see that we do not have all the seats full of public servants. Most of them are out there still working in their offices.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: In deference to you.

Mr WELLINGTON: I think it is a great move. I thank you for your answers to my questions on notice. In particular I refer to your answer to question No. 8. I note that you refer to the fact that \$10,000 was allocated to Sorry Day activities. Without being pedantic, how important is the celebration of Sorry Day to the government? Do you plan for this activity to continue and with further funding next year?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: It is more important to the indigenous people. It is hugely important to them. If government can assist in Sorry Day then it is hugely important for us, too. I am very proud to be part of a government that actually stood up and said sorry. We will support it in any way we can. It was a huge event and really important. The lighting of the candles at City Hall was held on the eve of Sorry Day in deference to the football the next day.

We will be supporting it. It will be ongoing support. We talk about various areas and how they want to work with Sorry Day. At one stage they wanted to have a conference and bring people up. We did not think it was appropriate that we bring people from other states. If their governments want to send them here then absolutely they should be supporting that, but if we can support Sorry Day in some way we certainly will. It is hugely important.

Mr WELLINGTON: The other question I have also comes out of your answer to question No. 8. You refer to the fact that \$10,000 was provided to the Heritage Trails Network at Laura. Can you explain what that was about?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: The heritage trail at Laura?

Mr WELLINGTON: Yes.

Dr Hoey: I think I can add a little to that. Perhaps we might need to seek some additional information from the champion at Laura. There is a trail that links the Quinkan centre, which is actually in Laura, with some tourist attractions outside. In fact, the honourable member for Cook might be better able to answer this question. He is nodding his head. Because I have not had the opportunity to see that, I have to visualise. I have spoken to the champion, and they do have some attractions outside Laura.

Mr O'BRIEN: It is Split Rock.

Dr Hoey: Split Rock. We have provided some support additionally to the Quinkan centre to get it up and running because the government invested significantly and it had a bit of a stop-start beginning. Now things are looking good. We wanted to provide something that linked that centre to the various attractions in the neighbourhood. Without the heritage trail to Split Rock the tourists would not have been able to get there effectively. They would just drive through the town and go on.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Again, cultural heritage is something that needs to be supported.

Mr WELLINGTON: I will be honest and say that when I read the Ministerial Portfolio Statements it seemed like I had to be an accountant, a lawyer and an expert in everything to get through it. When I looked at page 16 I saw a figure of \$0.65 million, yet the answer to my question on notice went further and you broke it down.

The CHAIR: I suggest to the member for Nicklin that he should ask a question and not make a statement.

Mr WELLINGTON: I am getting to the question. Next year would it be possible for you to actually give more detail in the Ministerial Portfolio Statements? Your answer to the question I asked gave more details about the matter. It just seems to me that so much time may be wasted and we can do it better.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: I am always happy to get that feedback and take it back to the department and look at it. I do not see why not. Director-General?

Dr Hoey: I agree, Minister.

Mr JOHNSON: Minister—

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Vaughan, I have the answer to the question we took on notice.

Mr JOHNSON: I only have a limited time, so I will ask a question. Could you incorporate that?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Certainly.

Mr JOHNSON: Minister, I am interested in the quality measure which is judged against ministerial requirements and departmental standards. Are these requirements and standards published? If so, will you provide a copy to the committee so that we have an appreciation of what quality measures actually means?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Can I ask which part of the MPS you are referring to?

Mr JOHNSON: I do not have that written down. It is in the MPS. I will ask another question. Minister, I refer to the output statement for strategic policy advice and to the quantity measure and ask how the 2004 target of 1,000 was established in light of the 902 for last year. What was the breakdown by category? That relates to briefings, policies and strategies.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: This measure is based on a count of the number of briefs registered through the ministerial and executive services correspondence system. The output measures the number of briefs about policies and strategies developed to achieve improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders to provide an indicator of the volume of briefs, policies and strategies on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues provided to me during a 12-month period. The Department

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy has a lead agency role in providing policy development and coordination of government and community partnerships in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in Queensland. As such, the department prepares a significant number of briefs relating to policies and strategies which aim to achieve improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. I will ask the director-general to provide further input on that.

Dr Hoey: Quantity is one measure, as the honourable member would appreciate. Quality is also critical. I guess it is an estimate of the volume of correspondence that comes through the system, but it does not tell you the story about the intellectual effort that goes in there. It is quite seasonal in the sense that during the MCMC preparation there was a hell of a lot of work. I would anticipate that with Partnerships Queensland coming up in the future it will escalate. So our estimate for 2004-05 might well be underdone, but we will wait and see.

The CHAIR: The time allocated for questions by non-government members has expired. I now call on the member for Burleigh.

Mrs SMITH: Minister, I, too, would like to refer to the homelessness blueprint, this time in Cairns. Can you inform the committee of the work being undertaken by the joint management committee in Cairns to implement the regional blueprint and how the department is supporting it? Specifically, can you expand on the activities of the street based outreach worker case management team as referred to on page 9 of the MPS?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: It would be my absolute pleasure, because the outreach service in Cairns is fantastic. I take this opportunity to acknowledge those workers in the outreach. They are fantastic. For 2003-04, \$100,000 was allocated to fund key actions under the regional blueprint for Cairns. A range of initiatives to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness have been implemented in Cairns. Since early 2003, a joint management group has been established in Cairns. Membership includes representatives from Cairns City Council, a state member of parliament, key state government agencies, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and a representative of Cairns traditional owner groups.

A community patrol has been established in Cairns. In 2003-04 the community patrol in Cairns was funded by a departmental allocation of \$97,000. The community patrol has been actioned through a memorandum of understanding between the Queensland Police Service and DATSIP, resulting in the employment of two police liaison officers, who are fantastic, especially assigned to community patrol duties. The department's far-north Queensland office also funds a vehicle for the community patrol at a monthly rate of \$489.

The street based outreach service has been established by the department to operate as a street based service. The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Department of Communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services each fund a service staff member. The service has been established to respond quickly to the needs of homeless people in Cairns. The service meets regularly with a range of service providers, works in partnership with the community patrol and provides direct access for homeless clients to service agencies.

Both the community patrol and the street based outreach service have received positive recognition from the joint management group and the wider community. On several visits to Cairns I have had the pleasure of meeting with members of the street based outreach service and community patrol. Again, I personally commend these people for the work they undertake on a daily basis. In their daily duties they display a sincere interest in and a longstanding commitment to assisting indigenous people at risk and have formed a number of networks with other service providers and agencies such as Queensland Health, the Police Service and Centrelink. Just recently when I went up I learned that they have a new recruit working with them—a young man who used to be homeless. Richard O'Brien, a youth worker originally from Lockhart River, is doing a sensational job. He has been living in Cairns for some time now and he has been working with the group. His knowledge of issues concerning homeless people is absolutely invaluable. I applaud the wonderful work this group undertakes.

Mrs SMITH: A good news story. Page 8 of the MPS mentions the activities of the government champions and the negotiation tables as they progress the Meeting Challenges, Making Choices initiative. Last year the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy informed the committee how this innovative community engagement mechanism would work. Minister, could you now outline to the committee the key outcomes and achievements of the negotiation tables and provide an update on how the government champions are delivering for their communities?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Certainly. Again I take this opportunity to acknowledge the previous minister for this portfolio for this initiative. I think it is excellent. Government champions and negotiation tables are fantastic, so I acknowledge the work that was done. The government has allocated directors-general as government champions of 22 communities—each of the 19 MCMC communities plus Coen, Laura and Mossman Gorge—to manage negotiations at the highest level and coordinate our efforts within the Australian government and the community. I also have to add that negotiation tables are not just in remote areas. We also have them in our rural, regional, urban and metropolitan areas, so we are looking after everyone on an equity basis, and I think that is terrific.

To date 70 visits have been made to the 22 communities and negotiation tables have been convened. The negotiation table process has ensured that issues have been brought to the attention of chief executive officers and has enabled a sustained process of consultation, planning and negotiation between community leaders and senior public servants. It needs to be said that the advent of this initiative, having the CEOs going to the communities and sitting at these tables, enhances Partnerships Queensland's approach because the directors-general get very excited about going to these communities. Therefore, it does become core business for their portfolio as well, and that is essential.

Issues so far identified as part of the government champion negotiation table processes include alcohol demand and policing strategies, child protection, family support, community justice group support measures, health, education and truancy, employment and training, communications, housing, building and transport infrastructure, economic development strategies and sanitation. Key outputs of the negotiation table process include the development, monitoring and review of shared responsibility agreements and community action plans.

While the government champion initiative is in its earliest stage, with efforts focused largely on orientation and relationship building, a range of issues has been addressed through champion visits to communities and negotiation tables. These include Queensland Health and DATSIP taking leading roles to implement a petrol sniffing strategy in Aurukun, funding allocated by the Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development for a tourism strategy at Cherbourg, a multiagency housing committee issued in Doomadgee, Queensland Police Service constructing a new station at Hope Vale, the Department of State Department and Innovation assessing the feasibility of a guesthouse and mud crab venture at Injinoo, construction of a helipad adjacent to Palm Island Hospital, the Department of Education and the Arts working with the community to reduce truancy at Umagico and the Department of Emergency Services delivering first aid training at Wujal Wujal. I sincerely hope the competition between departments continues.

Mrs SMITH: With regard to the ongoing wages reparations process being undertaken by the government, can the minister inform the committee of the progress of the wages and savings reparations process, including the amount that has been disbursed and the number of successful claimants?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: I would like to thank you for that question. For the benefit of the committee, I would like to provide some background to this ongoing issue. As most people would be aware, on 9 May 2002 the Queensland government made a reparation offer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples affected by historical controls under the protection acts over their labour, wages and savings. This is a historic initiative and one that acknowledges the past history of poor treatment of indigenous Queenslanders by successive governments and symbolises this government's recognition of past injustices. It is important to note that we have been the first, and so far the only, state to address this historical injustice.

Up to \$55.4 million is available over three years for reparation payments. Funding for reparation payments is provided to the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy via equity injections, with \$18 million provided in 2003-04, \$20 million allocated for 2004-05 and the balance in the following year. As at 30 June 2004, 6,789 claims have been received. Of these, 3,034 claims have been assessed as eligible and 2,632 eligible claimants have been paid a total of \$10.48 million. Twelve hundred claims have been assessed as ineligible. For 999 of these claimants, the department has not located any evidence that the government controlled their wages or savings. Of the remainder, 175 are ineligible because they were born after the eligibility date of 31 December 1956, and 26 are ineligible because they died before the eligibility date of 9 May 2002.

Eligible claimants are required to sign a deed of agreement releasing the state from further claims relating to the control of wages or savings. Eligible claimants receive independent legal advice at no cost to them before deciding whether or not to sign the indemnity and accept the reparation offer. I think that is very important to note. The department has established a panel of legal providers for this purpose. Fees charged by panel members for the provision of legal services range from \$110 to \$220, including GST, per eligible claimant. The department also meets their travel costs, pays travel allowance and reimburses outlays. The provision of legal advice in 2003-04 cost \$524,000 and it is anticipated that the legal advice to eligible claimants in 2004-05 will cost \$500,000.

The reparations offer has been the subject of criticism for not going far enough in compensating those wages and savings. The reparations offer is not a replacement amount for any money which people believe they are owed. No amount of money could fully make up for the past injustices suffered by Queensland indigenous people under the protections act. Whilst we are the only state to have acknowledged this injustice, I understand that the New South Wales government has announced the start of a reparations process but it is still to be finalised.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, one of the key concerns that is expressed to me by indigenous Queenslanders is the lack of coordination between government agencies, both at a state and Australian government level. I refer to page 9 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements, and I ask: how is the state

government working with the Commonwealth through the Cape York Strategy Unit to address indigenous disadvantage on Cape York Peninsula?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: In releasing Cape York partnerships in May 2000, the Queensland government entered into a new relationship with the people of Cape York—a relationship built on the principles of partnership, shared responsibility and local communities coming up with their own approaches and solutions to local issues and priorities. The Cape York partnerships model guides how Queensland works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and builds relationships between communities and the Queensland and Australian governments. The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy continues to support Cape York partnerships in new ways of doing business.

The Cape York partnerships model has helped prompt the public sector reform used to create the Cape York Strategy Unit within the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. The unit is the key government entity for coordinating a whole-of-government response within the Meeting Challenges, Making Choices priorities. The Cape York Strategy Unit plays a very important role in facilitating and promoting relationships between Queensland and Australian government offices as well as between the government and the community. We are working together to build a united approach to program development and service delivery between the community and government.

In addition to the Cape York Strategy Unit in Cairns, the Queensland government has set up a chief executive officer committee to specifically ensure MCMC initiatives are implemented effectively and that indigenous community concerns are addressed. The Cape York Strategy Unit is unique in the Australian public sector in that it brings together the skills of key agencies showing whole-of-government coordination moving from rhetoric to practice.

The unit is currently made up of 10 Queensland and Australian government departmental officers from the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Queensland Health, the Department of Employment and Training, the Department of Communities, the Department of Education and the Arts, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Corrective Services, the Queensland Police, the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services agency and the Australian Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. These arrangements enable key public servants to work together in groundbreaking arrangements to build partnerships between governments and Cape York Peninsula indigenous communities. The unit assists 17 communities in the cape including Laura, Mossman and Coen. The unit is working closely with government champions and assisting communities.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, I refer to page 11 of the MPS and remind you that it is now four years since over one million Australians participated in marches across the country for reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. When the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation concluded its term in 2000, it asked governments to continue to strive towards reconciliation. Can you outline for the committee the activities your department has undertaken to achieve this important goal?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Yes, and we do support reconciliation and are a part of reconciliation. I know that you have been a passionate advocate for genuine reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous people, too, so thank you for that.

As unfashionable as my views maybe among conservative circles in Canberra, I still believe that this country will be unable to move forward until we achieve reconciliation and address the historical injustices suffered by Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. This is why I have been delighted to lead government activity around the issue of reconciliation.

The department undertook two successful reconciliation action plan initiatives in 2003-04, and in doing so implemented two of the planned strategies. The Reconciliation Business Forum in 2003 was held on 30 September last year. One hundred and sixty participants from indigenous and non-indigenous businesses, community organisations, government and the media attended the forum. The forum provided participants with an opportunity to discuss strategies for business development and reconciliation, create networking opportunities, contacts and enhance business relationships for the establishment and advancement of indigenous businesses, and develop mentoring relationships between private enterprise and the indigenous community. The department invested \$66,596 in the forum.

The young indigenous leaders program was also held on 29 September last year. Twenty young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across Queensland participated in the workshop, including a constituent of mine from Clayfield. He is an Aboriginal youth and he thought it was fantastic. It was a great initiative to allow young people to look at their opportunities and to achieve success for themselves and their communities. The department invested \$22,237 in the program.

Both the Reconciliation Business Forum and the young indigenous leaders programs were extremely successful, and as a result similar programs will be run in 2004. It is important to recognise these activities went beyond pure practical value. Bringing together indigenous and non-indigenous participants at the business forum was a powerful statement for reconciliation. It also provided a vital

capacity building exercise aimed at overcoming the social and economic disadvantages suffered by indigenous Queenslanders. In terms of the young indigenous leaders program, I believe it is so important that we train and skill up the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders of tomorrow. Unfortunately, too often their voices are not heard and we need to be doing more to encourage them to step forward and speak up. I will make sure that we do that. In 2004, activities under the reconciliation action plan will be lead by agencies other than the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy.

The communication campaign and the Queensland Reconciliation Business Awards will be led by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Reconciliation Business Forum by the Department of State Development and Innovation, and the young indigenous leaders program by the Office of Youth Affairs. The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy will provide overall coordination for the activities under the reconciliation plan. I am delighted to see that the other agencies have come to consider reconciliation to be core business.

Mr O'BRIEN: Thanks, Minister. I refer to page 8 of your MPS. Over the last five years the government has been working to improve the lives of indigenous Queenslanders through a number of policy mechanisms, including the 10-year partnerships, Cape York partnerships, the MCMC initiative and the justice agreement. Can the minister inform the committee how these strategies are being streamlined and integrated to create one single policy framework for all indigenous Queensland, whether they live in urban, regional or remote locations?

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Yes.

The CHAIR: Two minutes for this one.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Okay. I think it is really important to note, before I answer this question, that it is about all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whether they live in remote, urban, regional or country areas. There has to be equity amongst them all. I consider that as one of my things to follow through. It is for everybody.

This government has a vision for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders to have the same prospects for health, prosperity and quality of life as all Queenslanders. The government is committed to achieving the vision, and is providing real leadership to ensure all levels of government, community, business and non-government sectors work together to meet community needs. I mentioned in my opening address that the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy is in the process of moving away from a direct service delivery role so that we can focus on providing a whole-of-government policy coordination. Our role will be to make sure the needs of indigenous Queenslanders are part of the core business of every agency. This new role is exemplified in the development of Partnerships Queensland, The way forward for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queensland. This strategic policy framework currently being developed will provide a coherent foundation and structure for future policy initiatives.

Partnerships Queensland will deliver improved government performance and services for all indigenous Queenslanders, no matter where they live, and it comprises a set of cogent, coherent and aligned goals and policy objectives. These objectives will include strong families, strong cultures, safe places, healthy living and skilled and prosperous people and communities, a new way of doing business through the partnership and governance mechanisms of community engagement, improved community governments, better performing and more accountable service providers, shared responsibility, a streamlined performance measurement and a reporting framework consistent with the framework overcoming indigenous disadvantage.

The CHAIR: That concludes the examination of the estimates of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. I thank you, Minister, and your advisers for your attendance. A transcript of this part of the hearing will be available on the Hansard Internet quick access web within two hours from now. The committee will now adjourn. The hearing will resume at 4.15 p.m. to examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Mr Chairman, can I thank the panel for their attendance today. It is an important portfolio, and I thank you for being here. I would also like to thank my department.

Sitting suspended from 4.00 p.m. to 4.15 p.m.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D—LOCAL GOVERNMENT, PLANNING AND WOMEN

In Attendance

Hon. D. Boyle, Minister for Local Government and Planning, Minister for Women

Department of Local Government, Planning and Women

Dr T. Campbell, Director-General

Ms L. Guy, Manager, Finance and Facilities (Acting)

The CHAIR: On behalf of the committee I welcome ladies and gentlemen to our hearing. I am Robert Poole, the member for Gaven and the chair of the committee. My fellow committee members are, on my left, Mr Ted Malone MP, member for Mirani and deputy chair; on my right I have Ms Bonny Barry MP, member for Aspley; Mr Jason O'Brien, member for Cook; Mrs Christine Smith, member for Burleigh. On my left I have Mr Peter Wellington, member for Nicklin.

The next portfolio to be examined relates to the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women. I remind the committee and the minister that the time limit for questions is one minute and three minutes for answers. A bell will ring once 15 seconds before the end of these time limits and twice when the time is expired. I will allow more time for answers if the questioner consents.

The sessional orders require that at least half the time for questions at today's hearing is allotted to non-government members. Government members and non-government members of the committee will take turns at asking questions in blocks lasting approximately 20 minutes commencing with the non-government members.

In relation to media coverage of today's hearing, the committee has resolved that video coverage without sound and still photographs is allowed only during the opening statement and the commencement of proceedings after each change of departments. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask advisers to the minister to identify yourselves before speaking. Please also ensure that mobile phones or pagers are switched off while in the chamber so as not to disrupt proceedings.

I remind all those participating in the hearing today that these proceedings are similar to parliament to the extent that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. Standing order 195 provides that strangers to the parliament may be admitted or excluded from the hearing at the pleasure of the committee.

We are now considering the estimates of expenditure for the Local Government, Planning and Women portfolio. The time allotted is three hours. There is one break from 5.45 p.m. to 6 p.m. I declare the proposed expenditure for the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, you have five minutes to make your opening statement.

Ms BOYLE: Thank you, Mr Chair. I am pleased to address the committee and indeed privileged to be the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women. Achieving social and economic development in a state as diverse as Queensland requires a solid working partnership between state and local governments. Working in partnership strengthens the relationship in order to improve the wellbeing in local communities right across Queensland. This relationship is based on mutual respect and cooperation where there is shared jurisdiction between the state and local government.

Unprecedented growth in Queensland calls for this relationship of partnership to continue as the government plans for the future of Queensland. The state also works in partnership with local governments in the development and administration of their local planning instruments. Local government is integral to the land use planning system in this state. Councils are responsible for preparing and administering local planning schemes and these plans are prepared within a broader state context.

The regional planning process, based on a partnership model, is a great example of the way the state works with councils to develop policy responses that are relevant and appropriate at both state and local levels. Queensland local governments are accorded the greatest level of autonomy of any local governments in Australia. They are responsible for good governance within their shire, town or city boundaries with minimum intervention by the state. This autonomy is balanced by a range of accountability measures, such as annual reporting and open council meetings. The framework for the local government system exists within this broader context of a strong partnership between councils and the state government as we work together to develop a better quality of life for all Queenslanders.

Compared to other states, Queensland is at the forefront in terms of the financial assistance it provides to councils. The *Local Government National Report* published in February 2004 shows that the

Queensland government's funding to councils accounted for 42 per cent of the total amount provided to councils by all state governments to all local governments. Queensland per capita grant figures stood at over \$131—more than twice the national average of nearly \$60 and four times higher, I might say, than New South Wales' figure of \$29 and 13 times higher than Tasmania's of just over \$10.

The diverse range of funding programs available under the Local Government and Planning portfolio is making a real difference to the everyday lives of Queenslanders. The Beattie government will provide over half a billion dollars in grants to Queensland councils in this current financial year. The state government's funding programs equip councils in circumstances where their own financial capacity is limited to provide essential community infrastructure and improve community amenities such as provision of water and adequate sewerage systems, particularly in smaller communities; sewage treatment plant upgrades which reduce the level of nutrients entering Queensland waterways; drought and natural disaster relief to rebuild roads and public assets after floods and storms to minimise disruption in these communities; libraries; sports stadiums; security improvements in public places; parks improvements. These programs are a manifestation of the maturing partnership between state and local government and their joint commitment to improving the lifestyles of Queenslanders no matter where they live.

A recent significant development in local government was the transfer of administrative responsibility for Aboriginal and island councils to the Local Government and Planning portfolio on 1 July. This transfer will ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait island communities have an autonomous local government system which is supported by a specialist state government department, the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation.

As Minister for Women I am pleased to have in my portfolio the implementation of the five-year Women in the Smart State strategy. To ensure a better quality of life for women in Queensland is the major focus for the Office of Women during 2004-05. 2005, I might remind honourable members, is a significant year for Queensland women in that it marks the centenary of women's suffrage. In 2005, it is 100 years since Queensland women were granted the right to vote at state elections. 2005 also marks the 40th anniversary of the right to vote in state elections for indigenous Queenslanders. While we should celebrate that milestone, it is a shame upon us that their vote came so late.

The CHAIR: The first round of questions is from the non-government members. I now call upon the member for Mirani.

Mr MALONE: I welcome you, Minister, and your staff. I do not know what we did to pull the graveyard shift, but we have got it. The first question I would like to ask is in relation to the state/local government protocol. Page 12 of the MPS dot point 1 refers to the establishment of a revised state/local government protocol. You might recall that when I asked you a question in parliament on 11 May 2004 about this agreement being broken just three months into the first term you stated your absolute commitment to a proper administration and implementation of the protocol and you said there were 'some matters of timing that need to be addressed in terms of who does what in what order to make sure that consultation is full and smooth right across government, and I look forward to taking a role in making sure that that protocol is properly implemented over the next three years.' Minister, can you explain why you did not consult with local government in the issue of valuations according to that protocol?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you to the honourable member for the question. In fact, I have in front of me a copy of the protocol. It is so important—and I do take the opportunity to reaffirm my commitment to its implementation—that I carry one with me almost everywhere that I go, though on this occasion I got out a new and not-so-dog-eared copy to bring with me to the committee. I do stand by those words, indeed, and am now charged, of course, with the implementation of the protocol. I have had numerous discussions with the LGAQ about its implementation and how we can ensure that we are meeting the fine standards and general responsibilities mentioned in the protocol.

There have been several concerns expressed by the LGAQ since I have been the Minister for Local Government and Planning in relation to the protocol. So far as the question you asked is concerned, one of those was in relation to the valuations this year; the valuations, in fact, that could not be conducted for very good reasons under, of course, the leadership of the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines. In fact, there was considerable consultation between the LGAQ and the minister and my office during the months leading up to the decision that, in fact, the valuations could not be conducted this year. Additionally, there was communication with individual councils.

The sticking point, if you like, came at the end as an amendment was introduced into parliament and there was discussion—and has been since—between the LGAQ and the responsible minister about the wording of the legislation and when exactly that should have been brought to the attention of the LGAQ. It was a matter of concern at the time, as I said, but I understand that that has now been resolved.

When incidents arise such as that one—and I dare say there will be others along the way where the implementation of the protocol will not be absolutely smooth—then the important thing to do, as was done on that occasion, is for me to take as it were a communications role in the middle between the

LGAQ, any other representatives of local government and the portfolio minister to ensure that a lesson is learnt from the circumstance.

What we have found, in fact, is that the implementation of the protocol comes down to some difficult matters such as exactly who should it be: the minister or ministerial staff or the director-general or other officers from the department and who should they communicate with and how often. That, of course, has to be measured a little bit against the item of the time and how much warning is available. I will ensure to the best of my ability, however, that those difficulties are minimised.

Mr MALONE: As you well know, the crunch came because retrospective legislation was passed through the House. Since the breaking of that protocol and the issue of valuations, has the Premier made a commitment to you that he or any other minister will consult with you on all issues affecting local government prior to a decision being made, signed, sealed and delivered?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. I do not agree that the protocol was broken, only that miscommunication occurred in terms of the expectations of the parties as to the detail at the last minute. I have generally spoken with the Premier about the importance of my implementation of the protocol and there is already in place—and I give my thanks to the previous Minister for Local Government and Planning who undoubtedly would have influenced that—a solid communication system between other departments and my department about matters affecting local government.

In these four or so months there has been no occasion when I have needed to pick up the phone and call another minister in the belief that in any way was my department or my own office not properly consulted about any matters affecting local government. In fact, I have been impressed by the working parties that various other departments generally have towards the detailed implementation of any new programs and the inclusion almost as a matter of course of the director-general of my department or his representative on those working groups.

Mr MALONE: In response to non-government question on notice No. 3 relating to the new pool safety laws which came into force from 1 November 2003, you stated that a number of local governments are not issuing fines because they are not yet registered to do so under the State Penalties Enforcement Regulation 2000. Can you tell me exactly how many local governments are not registered? Why is this the case when the legislation has been in force for almost eight months?

Ms BOYLE: The legislation has been around, as you say, for eight months. It has been more enthusiastically embraced by some local governments than others, I must say. There are some councils that have a heavy work agenda already and have regarded the amendments that were made and the additional opportunities they have to ensure pool compliance as not as high on their agendas as I would have wished.

It is important to understand that the pool fencing legislation was introduced in 1991. The changes that we made did not bring in a new regime of fencing standards. In fact, they were already there and were not being enthusiastically administered by a lot of councils. There have been improvements since our further amendments in November 2003. We should keep in mind that the objectives of the amendments concerning all of the efforts that the state should make and the councils should make are to reduce, as far as possible, toddler drownings. We have had some success in Queensland—they have been halved. Nonetheless, there is, as your question indicates, further to go.

My department has recently surveyed councils to find out how well these laws are being administered. I am pleased to say that Brisbane, Noosa, Logan, Cairns and Townsville have taken up the cudgel. You might notice in my mentioning those councils that they are amongst the larger councils and therefore the councils with greater resources. They are probably councils more used to the inspectorial system and with suitable people already on staff and available to conduct the inspections.

The survey highlighted that since 29 June the councils have inspected over 2,000 pools and issued 98 on-the-spot fines. Your reference, however, to the councils that are not yet administering the legislation is one that I take seriously. I have, therefore, quite recently emailed all of the councils asking that they take up this legislation. I have offered further assistance particularly in terms of the training for council officers. The on-the-spot fines are very considerable. I am keen in fact that the councils have the courage, as well as the will, to enforce those on-the-spot fines particularly over the next few months before the summer season. You will see from my department a renewed effort in this regard.

Mr MALONE: Minister, I guess you would be concerned as minister that the second largest council in Queensland, the Gold Coast City Council, possibly the council with the greatest number of pools, has not carried out one random pool inspection. Out of 800 infringement notices only two penalties have been imposed. Are you making a concerted effort to address this? What role have you taken with regard to that matter?

Ms BOYLE: My efforts have been to investigate why should it be so when on-the-spot fines are available to inspectors when they attend and find breaches. Why are they not being given to people? The information I presently have to hand suggests that we can improve the situation by training. What has happened in some councils, possibly within the Gold Coast City Council, is that the task is given to inspectors who already have a busy agenda. You can certainly imagine the circumstances that would

apply in the Gold Coast area, with the tremendous development going on there and the number of new residences being constructed.

Some inspectors have not regarded this as a priority area. Further, it appears that when they have gone out on inspections and discovered breaches it has been their practice to give a warning at the time and to come back in two weeks to make sure the warning notice has been complied with and the faults of whatever kind fixed. The other information that has come in is that sometimes they have discovered that the pool fence is in place, the pool gate is properly closed—that is, that the major safety efforts of the legislation have been met—but they have discovered some incidental or minor breaches of the legislation, handed out notices about those and then gone back in two weeks to inspect them. This is costly in terms of time and undertaking this role, without a return via a fine to the owner.

I am keen that the training we provide assist councils and their inspectors to target the major breaches that may impact on the safety, particularly of young children. They should not be doing inspections concentrating on the minor detail. That is missing the point. That is where I am pleased to have the assistance of the Surf Life Saving Association, the Swimming Pool and Spa Association and the Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit in targeting that training in the most effective way. I hope that in a year from now I can report to committee much better use of the powers by councils to minimise, in the end, the number of drownings.

Mr MALONE: Minister, you would agree that this is a very serious matter in terms of not only our children but also young people and others in the community. You spoke about training being important for councils to undertake to get up to speed with the legislation, particularly those people who are in fairly busy roles currently. Has the government assisted local government financially or otherwise to do this?

Ms BOYLE: I believe we are assisting by virtue of the legislation itself and by giving them the powers. I also understand that that is why the minister of the day was keen that the penalties be very significant. That is a means of assisting councils. I will let the committee know that, for example, the penalties for failing to fence an existing pool and failing to maintain a fence around an existing pool in good condition warrants an on-the-spot penalty of \$525. That is giving council very significant authority to send a very clear message to residents to ensure compliance. A breach of 16B(2), failure to fence a new pool, attracts an on-the-spot fine of \$525. Failure to ensure an access gate or door is kept securely closed could result in a fine of \$300. There are some other examples that I would be pleased to present should committee members be interested.

I am, however, keen that we look again at how the training has been provided as well as what is in the training on this matter and other matters for councils around Queensland. As I know the member is well aware, we have 157 councils in Queensland. The habit has been to provide the training generally via some documentation that is available to councils not only in paper form but also on the Internet. We also send out suitable people to provide training at regional locations.

What I suspect we can do better, particularly when you allow for changes in staff that occur maybe since the last round of regional training has occurred or where council staff are so busy that they do not always read all the information available to them, is to provide a more user friendly training program via the Internet. That would be available to all council staff as well as to pool owners anywhere, any time. As the saying goes, these days it would be available 24/7. I have no doubt that this upgraded training program will significantly contribute to assisting councils.

The other element of our assistance was the extensive media campaign that was carried out at a cost of approximately \$150,000. This was to raise awareness of the pool fencing laws. This was a cost to the state government, not a cost to local government. I believe it sent an effective and strong message informing people of the new standards under the pool fencing regulations.

Mr MALONE: In my question on notice I requested information on the 125 local governments. Could you take that on notice and provide that at a later stage?

Ms BOYLE: I would be pleased to provide whatever information we have.

Mr MALONE: On page 18 of the MPS at dot point five under 'Future Developments' you refer to the continued support of the Urban Drought Water Supply Task Force. Since the formation of the task force, how many communities or local governments have been identified as facing domestic water supply difficulties? What level of direct financial assistance has been provided by your department in total in each case?

Ms BOYLE: I am pleased to inform you that the Urban Drought Water Supply Task Force was established in 2002. It is chaired jointly by the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, and me. I am pleased to inform you that the task force has met six times since its inception.

While the task force assists with the implementation of the Drought Stricken Local Government Urban Water Supply Assistance Scheme, it also assists with emergency urban water supply. The depletion of the water supply source must be a result of drought conditions which have existed in the

region over an extended period. Council must impose severe restrictions on the affected community in terms of the usage of domestic water for eligibility under this program.

In 2003-04, eight councils were allocated funding under the scheme for 13 water supplementation measures. They were as follows: Barcoo shire for Stonehenge and Jundah; Cloncurry shire for Cloncurry; Eacham shire for Malanda, Johnstone River estate, Yungaburra and again for Malanda; Hope Vale Aboriginal council for Hope Vale; Kilcoy shire for Kilcoy and Jimna; Peak Downs shire for Capella; Sarina shire for Sarina; and Thuringowa city for Paluma. The amounts committed to those councils are available should you wish me to inform you of them now or at a later time.

The value of assistance approved for emergency water supply supplementation during 2003-04 was \$1.31 million as at 22 June 2004. The level of funding approved is based on cost estimates prepared by the local governments themselves. They are then reviewed by DNRME. As recently advised, there are presently no councils with communities facing critical depletion dates up to 1 July 2005, providing favourable climatic conditions continue. The critical dates are the depletion date of normal water resources if there is no significant inflow to storages in the meantime. The situation in the at-risk communities is constantly under review. Three councils have been identified as being expected to receive continuing assistance in 2004-05. These are Boonah shire, Emerald shire and Mirani shire.

The CHAIR: The time allocated for non-government questions has expired.

Ms BARRY: Minister, thank you for your time and that of your staff and department officials today. On page 4 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements under 'Budget Highlights' there is reference to the regional planning program. The government is making \$3.6 million available over the next four years to support regional planning outside the south-east Queensland metropolitan region. Can you explain to the committee how this funding will be used?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. This is a topic of some considerable interest to me as a member from regional Queensland. My department will spend an extra \$900,000 in each of the next four years on supporting the regional planning efforts of councils in seven regional planning projects outside the south-east corner. The total budget allocation for regional planning outside the south-east Queensland metropolitan region will increase to approximately \$2.7 million as a result of this additional funding.

This represents an increase of more than 40 per cent over the 2003-04 budget allocation. Specifically, the additional funding will provide for the gulf regional development plan. Within that, we will establish working groups to progress implementation of the priority actions endorsed by the RPAC and undertake further studies and GRDP strategy development in areas prioritised by the gulf RPAC. Really important is resource finalisation of a memorandum of agreement between the gulf RPAC and Aboriginal people in the region as a framework for the engagement of Aboriginal people in the gulf regional development plan project. Money will also be provided to the far-north Queensland regional plan to commence a major review of the FNQ regional structure plan in the second quarter of 2005 to focus on the preferred regional settlement pattern and development sequence.

Further moneys will be provided to the Townsville-Thuringowa strategy plan to finalise the review of the Townsville-Thuringowa strategy plan regional development sequence and refer the findings of this study to the regional coordination committee. We will incorporate any amendments appropriately in the plan as well as provide increased support for the regional planning group to coordinate implementation of the Townsville-Thuringowa strategy plan. As members would be aware, in far-north Queensland as well as in north Queensland there are very considerable growth pressures.

The Whitsunday hinterland and Mackay 2015 regional planning project will be supported through assistance to coordinate the WHAM regional plan development and implementation activities. We will publish the WHAM 2015 regional plan and publicly launch the WHAM 2015 regional plan in 2005. Additionally, there will be moneys for the central Queensland and new millennium project. We will launch the Central Queensland Regional Information Service. This is a pilot project which will not only of course benefit the people of central Queensland and others interested in regional development in the central Queensland area but which if successful will hopefully set the standard for a similar project in the other regions of Queensland. There will be additional projects for the Wide Bay Regional Planning Advisory Committee and the Eastern Downs Regional Planning Advisory Committee.

Ms BARRY: Thank you, Minister. The MPS also indicates that your department will provide high-level technical and administration support for all seven regional planning advisory committees outside of south-east Queensland. What do you expect will be the outcomes for the regional planning projects in 2004-05 as a result of this support and the additional funding?

Ms BOYLE: You are quite right in that the additional funding will provide technical support. It will provide a secretariat service to all of the regional planning advisory committees. It will coordinate the implementation of the various regional growth management frameworks. It will develop and maintain regional information systems designed to support well-informed decision making. It will ensure that an effective monitoring and review program for all of the plans is maintained. It will provide support to

agencies and organisations who are themselves the direct implementation agencies for the strategies and actions already identified in the regional growth management plans.

The additional funding will particularly conduct some reviews where there has been significant growth pressures since the original plans were developed. This certainly applies to the Wide Bay 2020 regional growth management framework. It certainly applies to the far-north Queensland 2010 plan where growth pressures and population settlement plans have overtaken the plans and where the plans should be reviewed. I have already mentioned the importance of the memorandum of agreement between the gulf RPAC and Aboriginal people. One of the important areas where we will work is with the eastern downs regional growth management framework. It is a different circumstance in the eastern downs where there is uneven growth, yet there is tremendous energy in the mayors representing the shires under the eastern downs group. I met with them recently, in fact, and they were kind enough to encourage me to continue to chair the RPAC in the eastern downs, and I will be pleased to do so.

There is a wish on the part of the mayors that the vision for the eastern downs be revisited and that we meet together to really understand the key directions forward for the eastern downs, and I am keen to assist them with this. I have no doubt that there is room right throughout the regions of Queensland for population growth and that those who cross the border to enjoy a better lifestyle in Queensland need not stop driving as soon as they cross the border but in fact they may wish to proceed west. We are suggesting that there should be signs telling you to turn left as you come over the border or proceed more northerly so that we can distribute that growth with the regional plans in place to make sure that there is steady development yet protect the very good lifestyle that is enjoyed in all of the regions of Queensland.

Ms BARRY: Thank you, Minister. I have a further question on good planning. I believe that there is a proposed development in Brisbane city for a 77-storey residential tower which would make it the tallest building in Brisbane. There has been some opposition to this proposal, and I ask: will the state government play any role in determining the future of this proposed development?

Ms BOYLE: I thank you for the question. It is indeed timely. I have this morning called in this development application. It is clear that this development, which is known as Emerald Towers, has the potential to have an enormous impact on both the city skyline and the amenity of local streets. The proposal is for a 250-metre high building which would be 37 storeys higher than the current tallest building in Brisbane, Central Plaza One, and it would be home for somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000 people. The existing development approval for the site is for a 28-storey building. This, therefore, is for a building some 49 storeys higher than the existing approval. As the state Planning Minister, it is my view that there are some real issues with this development for the state government, and that is why I have taken the decision to use powers available to me under the Integrated Planning Act to call in Emerald Towers. This means that I will become the assessment manager for this development.

I have today advised both the applicant and the Brisbane City Council in writing of my decision to call in the development. I have informed them that I have done this for the following reasons. I am of the opinion that the development involves a state interest. The state has an interest in ensuring that the buildings of Brisbane's central business district maintain continuity and coherence with the city's cultural heritage—for example, the qualities and characteristics of its locations—and contribute to social and aesthetic amenities appropriate to its business, tourism, residential and recreational functions as the major city of Queensland and of the south-east Queensland region in particular. The development proposal will impact on the efficient, effective and accountable planning and development assessment system and the development proposed may negatively impact by providing an inappropriate landmark of significant height, bulk and character which would not only impact on the surrounding precinct but which would change forever the skyline of the greater Brisbane area and the very character of the capital city of the state of Queensland.

I inform the committee that both Lord Mayor Campbell Newman and Deputy Mayor David Hinchliffe have made their opposition to Emerald Towers very plain. I met with the Lord Mayor earlier this month and we discussed both Emerald Towers and his plan to produce a strategic master plan for the CBD for the next 15 to 20 years. Members of the committee would understand, particularly those members who are regional members, that Brisbane city is not just for those who live or work in the city. It is also the capital city of Queensland, and therefore its development and any significant changes such as this development may herald are of concern to Queenslanders across the state.

Ms BARRY: Thank you. I really appreciate that answer, Minister. A little bit closer to the ground. I refer to a question on notice regarding water conservation and reuse, and I was pleased to hear your recent announcement regarding grey water reuse. What are some of the benefits of allowing grey water reuse?

Ms BOYLE: The obvious benefit. Thank you for this question. It is an important question and one that I hope all of us not only within the parliament but right across Queensland address further as these months and even years pass. The obvious benefit of course is that it may save us on our potable water supplies. I have for a period in my life had the habit of being a good gardener and wishing therefore to have water available to look after my garden. After all that hard work that gardeners put in to plant their

lawn and then maintain their gardens, it is hard for them when there are drought conditions or limitations on water supplies to not have water immediately available to water their gardens. In fact, councils' experience has been that there are some people who, even in drought conditions such as have been experienced in much of Queensland in recent years, are so proud of their gardens that they breach council regulations and continue to water.

What grey water reuse in residential areas will allow is a supply of grey water available for subsurface irrigation in gardens. It is necessary for it to be subsurface irrigation primarily for health reasons—first of all, to protect us as human beings from the potential infections that can come from the ponding of grey water in gardens but also to protect against mosquito breeding or the attraction of vermin to any ponding of grey water. In south-east Queensland, where I have to say there has been the most interest in grey water use systems, estimates of future demands on the water supply indicate that all existing sources will be stressed within the next 10 years. The situation as we know is particularly severe on the Gold Coast, which already has water restrictions. The council is presently seeking access to Wivenhoe Dam given the existing demands on the Hinze Dam.

Bearing this in mind, it is conservatively estimated that there is potentially 100 litres of grey water per person per day available for use. The estimated population of south-east Queensland by 2011 is three million. This would mean that using all grey water would save 300 megalitres per day in potable water. Of course, not everyone will choose to use grey water. However, if 10 per cent of the population uses grey water, this means saving 30 megalitres of potable water per day. This would allow the existing potable water supplies to provide for more than 30,000 new dwellings. The other benefit of using grey water is that much less household waste water is discharged to the sewerage system. This in turn means less effluent is being discharged into our waterways. This will help to improve the water quality of our estuaries, rivers and streams.

Ms BARRY: With reference to page 5 of the MPS regarding waste water treatment projects and your response to a question on notice on this issue, could you please tell the committee how such projects will assist the COAG new water initiative that was announced recently?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. As I had said in my response to the question on notice, water is a precious resource right across Australia, which is of course—and unfortunately so—the world's driest continent. One of the aims of the new national water initiative agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments on 25 June is the conservation and efficient use of water. A way of achieving the most use from our water is to reuse water where it is economically and environmentally feasible to do so. Council sewerage treatment plants are potentially a source of water that can be reused to reduce the need to find new sources of raw water. In 1996 the state started providing a 50 per cent capital works subsidy toward the cost of taking effluent from a treatment plant to where the effluent will be reused. The Beattie government has continued this scheme.

The subsidy assistance to councils for the construction of reuse systems is an important step in helping councils—really helping local communities—play their part in achieving the objectives we all want to achieve in terms of sustainable water supplies as espoused in the national water initiative. Approximately \$35 million has been made available in assistance to 33 councils for 54 projects. Examples that I might quote to you again and that were included in the question on notice are good examples of this partnership. They include \$28.7 million of which \$8.8 million comes from the reuse subsidy to Mackay City Council for the Mackay water reuse scheme which will see treated waste water used for irrigation which will lessen the loss of good quality agricultural land through the effects of salt intrusion. It will also provide a guaranteed supply of industrial water to the Nippon meatworks. Another fine example is that of \$6.2 million of which \$1.23 million comes from the reuse subsidy to the Livingstone Shire Council to fund a new waste water treatment plant and reuse scheme for Yeppoon.

The funding will assist the Livingstone Shire Council to relocate and upgrade the treatment plant, with the waste water being used for irrigation in parks, gardens and a golf course. Funding of \$11 million, \$650,000 of which comes from the re-use subsidy, will go to the Toowoomba City Council for the Wetalla water re-use project, which will allow waste water to be used at the Charlton-Wellcamp industrial estate and the Ackland mine. I congratulate those councils on their foresight and their considerable efforts in developing these projects. They too have put their money into the very development of these innovative projects. They are leading councils, showing the way—I hope—to other councils with similar projects as the years go on.

The CHAIR: I call on the member for Cook.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, I refer you to an answer you gave to a question on notice which gives a breakdown by state electorates of grants and subsidy funding, and I ask which electorates fare the best out of this distribution?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. I must admit that when I first saw the list of those electorates which received the greatest amount in funding in this last year, I eagerly looked to see if Cairns city was on the top of the list. It is well down the list—at least this year.

I understand that the question was asked by an opposition member and I am not sure what, in fact, the opposition member was keen to find out. The grants and subsidies administered under the Department of Local Government Planning, Sport and Recreation are allocated according to set guidelines and are not distinguished by a political colour. The amount a council receives is largely determined by the infrastructure projects that the particular council decides to undertake. Of course, that is variable from year to year.

I will use the example of Cairns City Council in my electorate. The amount of money passed to the Cairns City Council would have been considerably higher in the previous several years because of a major initiative that was undertaken and well-supported by the state government; that is, the esplanade stage 1 project. The state government contributed \$11.5 million to that project. That stage of the project having been completed, those funds are not reflected in this year's budget. However, I am aware that the budgetary figures for the Cairns electorate will change again next year because my department has approved an allocation under the regional centres program for a major initiative that the council will undertake in the botanic gardens precinct. Those figures are variable from one year to the next not only for the Cairns City Council in my electorate of Cairns but also for the councils in other electorates around Queensland.

Of course, it is important that every application is assessed fairly and consistently against the set guidelines for the program. I reassure all members, including independent and opposition members, that there is no political bias in the allocation of grants. In fact, the opposition spokesman's electorate of Mirani is in the top ten electorates to receive the most money—as is, by coincidence, the member for Nicklin's electorate. The top ten seats include six National Party or independent seats. Those results demonstrate that local government funding is provided not on a political basis but on the basis of need and initiative.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. The time allocated for questions from government members has expired. I call on the member for Nicklin.

Mr WELLINGTON: Minister, I refer you to page 11 of your ministerial portfolio statement where it refers to a range of achievements reached after reviewing the performance of your department. In particular, I refer you to your answer to my question on notice No. 8 and I ask: do you plan to increase the resources of your department so that it can more effectively and efficiently analyse the potential impacts on local governments and provide better advice to you on changes to state policies which impact on local governments?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. Analysis by the department of whatever projects and policies are being implemented at any given time has been fulsome, although I do believe that there is room for improvement. Presently, it is my view that departmental resources have been used up, particularly in the planning area, by the great need to get the integrated planning act in place and by providing assistance to councils to get their IPA schemes into place. Once this has occurred for the majority of the councils, as it will by the middle of next year, considerable resources within the department will be freed up that are presently being used to that end. That will allow my departmental planners to attend more fully to audits or to the impact of existing policies, as well as new policies, and to ensure that as the years go on, we are getting further ahead of the game rather than simply responding to the immediate pressures of the day.

I have been impressed by the quick response of the local government services section of my department to the emerging areas of policy. A good example of this is a matter that was brought to our attention by the Toowoomba City Council in relation to requirements for inspections and approvals by council of tents over the size of 10 square metres. The matter was causing some consternation, particularly in relation to the gospel festival which is held around Easter time every year in the Toowoomba area. I am pleased to say that the present resourcing of the department, as well as the expertise of officers within the department, was such that they were able to conduct an audit review of people's views on this matter in local governments across Queensland. In doing so, they were able to quickly identify some changes that needed to be made. They further consulted with a range of local governments and other providers and brought in changes within a matter of months of that anomaly initially being brought to our attention. That suggests that the existing resources, even under the current work pressures, are managing the situation for now.

Nonetheless, I take your question very seriously and I inform you and other members that this is a matter of concern to me. I will be monitoring it closely over the next year.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you, minister. That certainly is appreciated because many councils believe that the state government is simply delegating more responsibilities to them and they are looking to you, as the minister, to be an advocate here in state parliament.

I refer you to page 12 of your MPS where it refers to working in partnership with local governments and peak industry bodies to improve the overall performance and capacity of local government systems to service the needs of the community through a range of activities. Numerous people on the Sunshine Coast, including local councillors, are talking about exploring the merits or disadvantages of amalgamating some of our coastal councils. Minister, what role do you plan to play in

these discussions on the merits or disadvantages of council amalgamations? Many people are looking to you, as the minister for local government, for leadership on this very contentious and difficult issue.

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. It is a very important matter for councils, large and small, right across Queensland at this time. The matter has been raised with me by members of individual councils and it is frequently discussed at local government conferences around Queensland. In fact, the honourable member for Mirani and I were at the urban local government conference in Caloundra last week, where this issue was further discussed.

You are right that some councils are looking to me and my department for leadership on this matter. They are also living with considerable anxiety and even fear that there may be forced amalgamations. Therefore, I have been quick to reassure local councils that I am not presently of a mood, as it were, to suddenly determine that there will be amalgamations referred to the boundaries commission without proper consultation. The position that I have taken and that I believe is appropriate leadership at this stage is to strongly encourage local governments—perhaps behind closed doors, in the first instance—to sit down and discuss the matter. Members of some councils have spoken to me about a neighbouring council they would like to have amalgamation discussions with—discussions only, at this stage. Other councils—maybe their neighbouring councils—have been resistant or have even closed the door on those discussions.

My leadership, therefore—and with some authority—will be to insist that members of local governments do discuss the options. However, I am asking that they not simply discuss the options of amalgamation or not. That would be unworthy of them. In a sense, you could regard the options for existing local councils as all the way along a spectrum, with doing nothing and staying as they are, with 157 local governments operating within existing borders at one end of the spectrum, right through to major amalgamations of, perhaps three, four or even five councils that are complete amalgamations. There are a number of options along that spectrum that should be explored and which might be the most effective in particular circumstances.

These are regional arrangements. For example, a group of five councils in the general south-east part of the state are considering making a contractual arrangement whereby they would outsource their planning functions to a central office that would serve all five local government authorities. They would fund that themselves and make that a formal arrangement. Other arrangements already exist for waste water management and for garbage management services. Prior to amalgamation, there may be an option for councils to take up regional arrangements, which may be a first step or a sufficient step to address the issues.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you. Minister, what I was looking for was whether you are prepared to delegate resources from your department to assist councillors in determining the merits or disadvantages of amalgamation. If there is to be logical debate or discussion, we need to know what is black and white; what are the facts; what is the criteria. At the moment there is a lot of emotion and hot air surrounding this. Minister, are you prepared or able to commit resources from your department and the skills available to you to assist councils in getting concrete information of the cases for and against?

Ms BOYLE: The short and specific answer is yes. However, I will take the time to alert you to the ways in which this information and advice is already available and will continue to be available, as well as offering you and local governments the reassurance that further resources will be made available, as needed.

Right now, this is a matter that can easily be forwarded through our regional planning advisory committees. That is where the discussions will take place. I have met with a number of regional planning advisory committees, taken up my role as chair and directly offered them that support and information as the discussions have proceeded, particularly about the facts that need to be laid on the table. The first kind of information that they have requested assistance with is the financial information and the population information that crosses their council boundaries. That resource is already available and I will lay that on the table. Additionally, the staff of my department will support them through the regional planning advisory committee process to address these issues.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that if we move further down the track and councils do request amalgamations or major external boundary changes, then I would refer those issues to the Local Government Electoral and Boundaries Review Commission for examination. The commission has considerable resources at its disposal to assist the councils and to lay the facts on the table for their internal information and to assist the residents of local government areas to be part of the process of determining whether an amalgamation or external boundary change should take place.

Information papers would be prepared and discussion papers would be a further resource provided through the boundaries commission as that process is steadily and sensibly followed towards reaching a recommendation from the boundaries commission. If amalgamations do indeed take place, it is a part of the process that a referendum would be undertaken and that would need further resourcing. Yes is the answer to your question.

Mr MALONE: I refer you to page 23 of the MPS, the third last dot point, which mentions that the department has improved the safety of occupants of budget accommodation buildings in the event of fire by working with local governments to advise owners on how to upgrade their buildings in accordance with the Building Act 1975. At this point, how many budget accommodation buildings have not met the first stage of fire safety standards, and that is install alarms, emergency lighting and adopt fire safety management plans by 1 July 2003? How many budget accommodation buildings have met the second stage of fire safety standards, and that means adopting extra safety measures including sprinklers and, in some cases, structural changes such as fire safe corridors and additional stairs and exits by 1 July 2005?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. I wish the answers could be given to you precisely. There are good reasons why the answers cannot be given precisely, although I am able to inform you of some numbers and I will do so. An amount of \$1.1 million was allocated for training and assistance to budget accommodation building owners and councils for these next two years, that is 2004-05 and 2005-06.

Mr MALONE: The second stage.

Ms BOYLE: Yes, to maximise the level of safety for stage 2. This amount will be used to assist owners of the remaining non-compliant stage 1 buildings as well. Our best estimate of the proportion of the existing budget accommodation buildings that have reached stage 1 compliance is, depending on the particular element of the compliance, in the nineties and may be as high as 97 per cent. The list of non-compliant buildings was noted by the Premier last year and compiled at that time by the fire service. Based on that data and that list of buildings, 97 per cent have been identified as having now complied with stage 1. However, the difficulty is that, since then, more budget accommodation buildings have been identified.

I will give you some compliance figures as provided by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service in its memorandum titled *Monthly Update: Post-Childers Budget Accommodation Inspection Program*, dated 5 July 2004. They say that 1,082 buildings have been identified through the QFRS as budget accommodation buildings. So far as stage 1 requirements are concerned, they have identified that 984 at least have a complying early warning system installed, 979 have complying emergency lighting installed and 945 of these 1,082 have a compliant fire safety management plan. I would ask you to note that the data provided by other agencies that were also involved—Housing, Fair Trading and Disability Services Queensland—indicates that we may well discover more than the 1,082 budget accommodation buildings in Queensland. Of course, that means that while I have to work with the other departments to work on stage 2 compliance, at the same time we will continue to discover buildings which must be brought up to stage 1 in compliance.

Mr MALONE: Given the funding that will be provided over the next two years to improve compliance levels of budget accommodation buildings as well as additional workshops that have not yet been conducted, do you believe that your department has done enough at this stage to assist local councils and budget accommodation building owners to comply with the legislation?

Ms BOYLE: I think that we have made good efforts, but, no, there is not enough done and more must be done and I thank you for the question. In fact, I might inform you that I have been putting my mind to this issue of how we can get the message out there better. Part of the difficulty and why we have not been as effective—and by 'we' I mean not just my department but the other departments involved and local governments—is that it is very difficult to get all the budget accommodation owners to the training seminars when you are able to run them. If we were to provide that kind of integrated seminar, which involves council inspectors, sometimes building certifiers, housing staff, QFRS staff and local government staff all throughout Queensland to those whole 1,082 building owners, then it would be a massive task.

Recently, I have come across a Brisbane City Council initiative for providing training in another area of local government services via a kind of virtual tour of the requirements and the regulations on line. My department has begun investigation to see if this may be a more effective way of educating not only those in councils and other departments throughout Queensland who are charged with the responsibility for inspections and ensuring compliance but also if this may be a more effective way of providing training direct to the budget accommodation managers and owners. If they were able to go on line at a time that suited them—at night, on weekends, whenever—and be taken through a virtual tour, as it were, of budget accommodation places with pauses along the way and markers to indicate the appropriate exits, the appropriate placement of signage, or of extinguishers and the like, then we may be able to reach more quickly that compliance that we would like to achieve—which is, of course, 100 per cent compliance.

Nonetheless, even if this initiative proves workable, it is not a reason to discount the, as you mentioned, training programs, regional workshops, online assistance, technical support by telephone and other support that my department will continue to provide. All of that support will be complemented by a mail campaign, which will inform owners of the roles of other government agencies such as

financial assistance and accreditation and provide detailed check lists targeted to the specific building type.

Mr MALONE: I refer to the Output Statement on page 25 of the MPS, dot point 2, which shows that only 111 IPA planning schemes were lodged for formal state sign off in 2003-04 with still a further 98 estimated to be completed this year and then a balance of four councils to complete their schemes in 2006. The original deadline of 30 March 2003 has passed and so has the former minister's extension to 30 June 2004. What do you believe has been the hold-up over the past 12 months? Is your department adequately resourced to provide assistance to councils over the next year? I am not having a go at the councils in respect of this matter. I know that it is a difficult issue. So maybe you would like to respond to that.

Ms BOYLE: Thank you very much for the question. It is a very important question as to why the targets have not been met. I am able to update you that there are now, in fact, 15 of the 123 local governments with their IPA schemes in place. As you say, this is nowhere near as many as we had hoped or wished at this stage. However, the schemes are well advanced by many councils and the expectation is that almost one-half of the schemes will be operational by June 2005.

Even though only 15 schemes are in place at this time, nonetheless I alert you to the information that those 15 councils cover 42 per cent of the population of Queensland. That signals to us all that the larger local governments have been able to move more quickly with bringing in their planning schemes. Of course, the reason for that is that they have the resources in terms of their planning staff.

One of the factors contributing to the delay with planning schemes has been the realisation not only in Queensland but also right across Australia of the shortage of planners. This has impacted particularly on country councils and especially on smaller councils in Queensland. Therefore, planners have been in great demand. Many of those who have previously worked in the local government sector have now been wooed by private sector organisations with very generous remuneration arrangements. This has left a serious problem for smaller councils in terms of the opportunity to engage planners and, in fact, the need for them to employ consultant planners to assist them.

The other major factor that has occurred that was not predicted, of course, is the massive growth that there has been in Queensland over these last years since the IPA schemes were prepared. That has put such pressure for development assessment under the existing schemes on the planning sections of councils that they have not had as much time as they might have wished or expected to have to get their planning schemes in place.

So my government and my department in particular should assist. Yet I must say to the honourable member that that is a balance, because it is really important that the local council does their local planning scheme. They are the ones with the understanding of their area, of what should be the priority areas for future urban development, and of where there should be protection, for example, of recreation areas or of agricultural lands. So while assistance is provided by my department and while my department does have the opportunity through authority to call in the schemes and do them for the councils, I would be very loath to do this.

The CHAIR: The time allocated for non-government members has expired.

Mr O'BRIEN: On page 11 of the MPS there is a reference to working with the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy to develop legislation applying the Local Government Act to Aboriginal councils. Why has the government decided to transfer Aboriginal councils to the Local Government Act? How will the government assist Aboriginal councils make the transition?

Ms BOYLE: The answer to your second question as to how will we assist Aboriginal councils to make the transition is in every way we can. It is a special time in the history of local government and in Aboriginal and probably in Torres Strait island communities that they should come across to my portfolio and be full-status local governments similar to the other 125 local governments in the state of Queensland. Allow me to remind you of some of the history of the matter.

Aboriginal councils were created under the Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984 to govern Aboriginal councils. That is only 20 years ago. The situation changed rapidly from one where every aspect of life in Aboriginal communities was tightly controlled by the state to a situation where communities largely managed their own affairs. While most Aboriginal councils diligently took up the challenge, remote Aboriginal communities continue—despite their efforts and government efforts—to suffer from numerous social and economic problems. In fact, many Aboriginal councils have struggled to achieve the required standards of financial accountability. My own view is that a significant factor in this has been the wide range of responsibilities the Aboriginal councils have covered—in some ways much wider than the present councils under my portfolio.

During Justice Fitzgerald's consultations with the residents of Aboriginal communities, the need to improve community governance was raised consistently. In Meeting Challenges, Making Choices the government made a commitment to improve Aboriginal community governance. Subsequently, in March 2003 the government released a green paper that explored options for improving the legislation for Aboriginal councils. As a consequence of this consultation, the legislation proposed to replace the

outdated Community Services (Aborigines) Act and adopt the same standards that apply to other Queensland local governments. Therefore, that is the determination. The new legislation will come into the parliament later this year and, with that, there will then be a strategy for a full transition to the Local Government Act.

The most important news for Aboriginal councils in this program is that the government is implementing a community governance improvement strategy in partnership with these councils. We have allocated funding of \$16.6 million over the next four years to ensure that this takes place in a smooth fashion. How exactly will that money be spent? While it has been generally determined, it is signalled in the budget papers and other policy papers from my department that it will in fact be determined in detail by further consultations with each individual council according to their needs.

Mr O'BRIEN: On page 18 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements there is a reference to environmental health related infrastructure. Could you please detail the assistance provided by your department to smaller and remote communities to meet the cost of providing infrastructure to support improved health and economic welfare?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. Since July 1998 more than \$940 million in state grants and subsidies has been provided to Queensland local governments and Aboriginal and Islander councils for almost 5,000 infrastructure projects. Additionally, just over \$100 million has been allocated through the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy for the development of essential environmental health related projects in mainland indigenous communities and island councils. Included in the \$940 million is \$136 million for water projects and \$158 million for sewage treatment and reuse projects. You may be aware that the Local Government Bodies Capital Works Subsidy Scheme provides subsidies for councils of up to 40 per cent for eligible water supply and sewerage projects and up to 50 per cent for eligible waste water reuse projects.

In terms of smaller and remote communities, the main programs are the Smaller Communities Assistance Program, known as SCAP, the major infrastructure program for Torres Strait and the Aboriginal infrastructure program. SCAP is a specific program which provides assistance based on health and environmental priorities in smaller urban communities for water and sewerage projects. It has been very popular indeed. The underlying principle of SCAP is that funding is directed towards providing assistance for smaller councils that have a need to undertake priority projects but have limited funds. SCAP has produced good outcomes throughout rural Queensland and received ringing endorsement from councils and communities. In my book it is one that has well and truly justified its existence and will be high on my list when I am looking at the types of funding programs we should have in the future.

The budget also includes an allocation of \$16.2 million over three years for the third stage of the Torres Strait major infrastructure program to help provide essential environmental health related infrastructure. This is in addition to the \$30 million provided by the state government for this program since 1998. I am pleased to say that this is a joint state-Commonwealth program, with the Commonwealth matching the state funding.

Additionally, from this financial year my department will also oversee the provision of financial assistance for the development of water and sewerage infrastructure for mainland indigenous communities. \$10.77 million is committed for infrastructure projects in these communities for this financial year. Since 1998 over \$70 million has been allocated for essential environmental health related infrastructure projects on mainland indigenous communities. However, the state does have an interest in ensuring that adequate water and sewerage services are available to Queensland communities right across the state. That is why these funds are really important.

Mrs SMITH: Wearing your hat as Minister for Women, are you able to provide advice to the committee on what benefits the 2004 state budget will provide for women in Queensland?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. I am pleased indeed to be Minister for Women. It is important that we recognise the purpose and the need still in having a Minister for Women in our government. I dare say that for many of the women who are present here today there is no need for a Minister for Women. Most of us present today are probably women who have, whether from being given opportunities or through knocking firmly on doors, been accorded the kind of equity that there should be for women in Queensland. We are women able to manage independently, and that is how it should be, of course, for all of the women of Queensland. Unfortunately, that is not so. There are still too many Queensland women who are living in poverty or who are living in circumstances where they are not safe and neither may their children be safe. They are still the victims, unfortunately, more than are men, of domestic violence and other violence. There are too many women who are still not getting a fair deal in the workplace. These are the reasons, of course, underlying the Premier's appointment of me as the Minister for Women.

The 2004 Queensland state budget will provide for increased spending right across key portfolios that are delivering on commitments for Queensland women as set out in *Women in the Smart State Directions Statement 2003-2008*. Within my own portfolio, the 2004 state budget provides for \$500,000 towards a new grants program for women which will be administered by the Office for Women. The budget provides for substantial spending increases across a range of key areas including women's

health, balancing work, family and lifestyle, and women's safety. The budget gives priority to delivering improved support and services to the wide range of Queensland women, including indigenous women, women in rural and remote communities, pregnant and parenting women, women who are entering or re-entering the work force and women who are in caring roles, as well as women who are living in poverty.

The particular programs that I might highlight to you are young women and antismoking strategies, improving birthing services, breast screening services, cancer control reforms, improving health services for rural and remote women, indigenous women's health, mental health reforms, smart eating for a healthier state, and balancing work, family and lifestyle. Might I let honourable members know that far and away the majority of casual employees are women. Some 16 per cent of young women—young mothers—are offered only casual work. It is really important that this government assist women who are not getting a fair deal in the work force and with balancing their work, family and lifestyle.

Mrs SMITH: Thank you, Minister. Further to that answer, on page 41 of the MPS there is a reference to holding a women's summit. One of the government's stated priorities is to deliver responsive government. How do you plan to ensure the voices of women are heard by government decision makers?

Ms BOYLE: I am very pleased, of course, to be part of the Beattie government and the women's team on the Beattie government, where I have had first-hand experience of how well women can make their voices heard. Particularly, if occasionally some men should falter in their active listening, I am well aware that you and the other female member of the committee present today have been well able to have their voices heard. There are some women in Queensland who, through their poverty or the experience they have had as women through maybe not being safe or not being given the education or the personal encouragement, have not been able to have their voices heard. It is really important, therefore, that through my portfolio I work to ensure that there is increasing women's representation in leadership and decision making roles and that that is not just by those amongst us as women who already have the skills to be heard but is continually increasing the numbers particularly of vulnerable women and assisting them with those abilities and avenues to be heard.

The Queensland government will therefore develop strategies to assist Queensland women wanting to pursue leadership opportunities. One way in which we already do this is through the Register of Women. One of the further initiatives to which you have referred is the Beattie government's women's summits, which are to be held every two years starting in early 2006. These summits will provide women in the community with an opportunity to provide feedback as to how we are tracking, as it were—how we are getting outcomes for Queensland women but particularly, too, to identify where still there needs to be concerted action to address inequity or underrepresentation or to provide further attention.

One of the important things that I dare say the women members of parliament here present, but maybe also those of the other sex, understand is that by gathering together and providing the summit whereby those gaps in services can be identified, what we also do is provide the participants with demonstrations of the confident and assertive style they will be able to develop following their own participation.

Too frequently we find that the reason women have not spoken up is not so much because the doors are closed in their face or because some men have been reluctant to listen; it has been that they have not had the confidence, the firmness of mind, to express their opinion. These women's summits will not only, therefore, inform the government of important further initiatives that we should undertake but also, I believe, contribute to the further spread of confidence amongst women to act and provide leadership in their own communities.

Mrs SMITH: Also in the MPS there is reference to the Coordinating Efforts to Address Violence Against Women strategy. What are some new activities the government plans to protect women and children from domestic violence?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. It is a very important question. As a society, right across the country of course, not just in Queensland, we have been brave enough to face the problems of domestic violence in particular, to identify that in many of those homes that look so fine from the outside to many of the people we have known over the years there has been this hidden but nonetheless very significant level of violence that has occurred in households. I give recognition to the tremendous efforts of the minister who preceded me at today's estimates hearings—that is, the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. The important initiatives undertaken and overseen by her, and by the Beattie government in general, to address alcohol abuse, not only in fact in Aboriginal communities but also elsewhere in Queensland, are very closely connected to the efforts that we must make to address violence against women. Our information is that at least half of the violence that occurs against women in their own homes is alcohol fuelled and therefore by addressing alcohol abuse we are also making some efforts to address violence against women.

Nonetheless, the Office for Women in my portfolio is taking very seriously the responsibility that we have for managing the government's Coordinating Efforts to Address Violence Against Women

strategy. During domestic violence prevention month in May this year I launched the Safe Women Queensland database, an on-line service that sets out government and community services which respond to sexual, domestic and family violence. It also provides information resources at a readily accessible, central location.

While a database may not sound on the surface of it like a major initiative, indeed it is. The need for it was brought to our attention by police, by domestic violence services, by community organisations and by women's groups across Queensland. When a woman does put up her hand, whether via the telephone or in person, and admits to violence in her home, it is really important that the resources are immediately there to give her the information and the support that she needs and to give those carers who may be available—those friends or workers in other organisations—the information and support that they need to make sure that the violence problem is immediately and well addressed. That is why that database really matters.

We are also working on further initiatives such as the national women's safety task force. We are working on personal safety information seminars for women throughout Queensland as part of the Safe and Active Women strategy. We are sending the message as strongly as we can to all women to admit the problem, to face the problem and to seek help from government and other community agencies to address it once and for all.

Mrs SMITH: On page 17 of the MPS there is a reference to the distribution of the Commonwealth financial assistance grant. In recent years there have been disputes with the Commonwealth over the distribution of the financial assistance grant. Do you expect this to occur for the 2004-05 grant?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you very much for the question. It is a very timely question indeed. It requires the wisdom of Solomon, whether on the part of the state government or the federal government, to decide how the financial assistance grant should be distributed fairly amongst Queensland's councils or, for that matter, councils in other states of Australia.

The Queensland Local Government Grants Commission, of course, is a statutory body charged with recommending the distribution of the Commonwealth's financial assistance grant amongst Queensland's 157 councils. You will notice, therefore, that it is a matter that is set aside from politics and is not and should not be influenced by political persuasion. That is why it is important that the grants commission operates independently. The method the commission uses to arrive at its recommendations must comply, however, with principles laid down by the federal government. In 2003-04 the total value of the grant was \$286.4 million. For 2004-05 the figure is \$293.9 million. May I inform members, in case they are not aware, that in Queensland any cost to the Department of Local Government and Planning of administering the grants commission is borne by the state. It is not taken out of the federal assistance grants to local government. The amount is provided to local governments in full.

The disputes that have occurred over the past two years were mainly caused by the previous federal minister for local government, the honourable Wilson Tuckey. Those who have followed that honourable member's career in the Commonwealth will know that disputes followed him wherever he went. He was not a man to negotiate or to argue rationally, in my view. The problems, particularly during his period as federal minister, were his insisting that the commission review its methodology in a very short time frame and, secondly, as part of the negotiations occurring over a suitable phase-in arrangement for the adoption of a new methodology.

The strong position taken, quite rightly, by the former minister for local government and planning in Queensland was that adjustments to the methodology meant adjustments to the moneys received, and that while some local councils would increase their grants others would reduce their grants, and considerably so, under the methodology signalled by the federal government, and therefore that a phase-in period was essential. Mercifully, minister Tuckey finally agreed and relations have been much better with the present minister.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Minister, the committee will adjourn for a break and resume again at 6.02 p.m. and continue with the Department of Local Government and Planning and Women.

Sitting suspended from 5.46 p.m. to 6.02 p.m.

The CHAIR: Estimates Committee D is now resumed. The question before the committee is—
That the proposed expenditure for the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women be agreed to.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Minister, I refer you to page 24 of your Ministerial Portfolio Statements where you refer to future developments in monitoring and improving the performance of building approval systems, including the competency of practitioners to ensure it remains efficient and accountable. How many staff undertake this monitoring activity? How many disciplinary actions or prosecutions have been commenced against non-compliant practitioners in the last 12 months?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for that question. While some information is coming to hand, might I say that while your questions are quite definite and specific, they follow from a long and important history about this matter. We are referring, of course, by and large to private certification of building work and

the problems that were identified since that system was introduced in 1998. No doubt, as the member for Nicklin since 1998, you are well aware of the complaints that had been received. The sorts of things that needed changing were to ensure that certifiers issued development permits for building work in line with planning schemes and other approvals. There were reports to us that, in fact, they were issuing permits that were not in line with the planning scheme. Those and other examples about their level of expertise—whether or not they were up to date, and their understanding of the Integrated Planning Act through which they must work—were all concerns that led the previous minister to make some amendments.

Where we are now, of course, is in a position much as we are with town planners, of having a shortage of qualified building surveyors. At the same time my department particularly—and I will ask the director-general to address you in a moment about the level of resourcing within the department—is working hard towards providing training for those building certifiers who have been in the business but need to upgrade their training. There are too many of them, I understand, who are towards the end of their working life and who are nervous of having, at their age, to get new qualifications and who are a bit resistant to the training. We are mindful of that and are intent on making the two-day course as directed, targeted and focused as possible, and as accessible to all of the building surveyors who need to complete it as we possibly can. I will ask my director-general, Dr Campbell, to talk to you about the resourcing within the department.

Dr Campbell: We do not have that information on hand now, but if you are happy we will take that on notice and provide the exact figures to you.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you. I am more than happy to take that information on notice because the Sunshine Coast is one of the fastest growing areas with a lot of development happening, and I really worry when I look overseas and see some of the buildings which collapse because the developers or the building surveyors simply have not done the right thing. I would hate to see that happen in Queensland especially because the legislation is there. Minister, my question is: how many staff are available to actually do this enforcing, monitoring?

Ms BOYLE: Staff of my department or building certifiers?

Mr WELLINGTON: From your department.

Ms BOYLE: That is the matter on which I believe the director-general is going to provide further information.

Dr Campbell: All right.

Mr WELLINGTON: I refer you, Minister, to page 18 of your Ministerial Portfolio Statements where you refer to future developments to—

continue to progress negotiations with the Australian government to secure joint funding arrangements for the delivery of essential environmental and health infrastructure needs for mainland Aboriginal communities.

How are these negotiations progressing at the moment in light of the pending federal election around the corner?

Ms BOYLE: I am pleased to say that in the reports to me—because it is a question that I have asked on a number of occasions quite recently—they are going well, and I have been reassured that it is not necessary for there to be any political action on that matter at this time. The agreements, with respect to the Commonwealth, are quite complex. They have existed before. The Torres Strait Island infrastructure agreement has been sorted out and we were able to announce our dollar-for-dollar funding in the budget. The Aboriginal councils is proceeding well. I am told it is not signed off on yet, but there are no signs that the Commonwealth is in any way losing track of the importance of the program because of distractions such as an upcoming election. I am hopeful of having good news soon.

I take the opportunity to support the implication of your question that it is really important that this program must continue. The previous program was one spread over some three years and I would hope therefore that, notwithstanding the time being taken for us to reach agreement, this also will be an agreement for three years.

Mr WELLINGTON: So what you are saying is that you have a good working relationship with the federal minister and that the election is totally irrelevant.

Ms BOYLE: I cannot say the election is totally irrelevant; I would not believe that that would be so. My information is that the Commonwealth department wishes, as we do, to have an agreement in place, that the policy position of that government as well as this government through me is absolutely in favour of this agreement occurring, that it is down to the nitty-gritty, as it were, of the detailed wording of the contract between departmental staff federally as well as at the state level, and that all is going well.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you, Minister.

Miss SIMPSON: Minister, I would like to ask you some questions with regard to the Office of Women's Policy.

Ms BOYLE: I will be pleased to receive them.

Miss SIMPSON: My first question is with particular regard to the planning requirements surrounding the office of urban growth management, but it is in fact an Office of Women's Policy issue. It relates to the fact that there is significant work currently being done to look at the issues of public transport and how that planning interfaces with the coordinated plans under the Office of Urban Management. What input has there been from you or from the Office of Women's Policy into public transport planning with particular regard to the safety of women in public places? I ask this in light of the fact that many women do have to travel home from work or study after dark.

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. It is an important question and raises a number of issues of particular relevance to women of whatever age who might be university students, and to young mothers who too frequently only have casual work which is often shift work and therefore would have to travel generally via public transport and in difficult hours. I am not aware of any direct work undertaken by the Office for Women, and unless I am able, through the staff present, to inform you of any initiatives of which I am not aware, I will take your question, if I might, as an imperative to take up that issue in the next little while.

Miss SIMPSON: Minister, I thank you for that because it is something that we support—the use of more effective public transport—but often there are issues of safety in public places. They apply to men, but women particularly feel these issues. It is important to have that voice into those arenas as those plans for infrastructure and services are delivered. I thank you for taking that issue on board.

In regard to some of the matters raised in the Ministerial Portfolio Statements—and I know that some of these issues have been touched on in earlier questions from government members—I refer to the online service that you referred to earlier about services for women experiencing violence to save women in Queensland. How does this service interface with the telephone service for domestic violence victims? Is there a referral service from the online site with any interaction for people who are experiencing domestic violence?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. The objective of the two programs—the provision of the database and the linking of the telephone numbers—is exactly that: to make sure that at both levels the telephone as well as the online information support are as integrated as possible. Of course that is not just for the populous areas or in the major cities of Queensland, but it is particularly for women who are in rural or remote areas where the number of services might be relatively few and far between.

Presently there are a large number of women who have been able to access the Women's Infolink, statewide information and referral services, and I am pleased to inform you that the numbers of these has been increasing year by year. The total number of client contacts from July 2003 to May 2004 were 30,414, which is 3.5 per cent up on the year 2002-03.

As far as the database is concerned, we have been making sure that it is linked with all the relevant services at a regional level, and these services should include sexual, domestic and family violence services as well as include an agreement between twelve 1800 and 1300 helpline services to link them together so that by ringing one of those services, in fact, you will have access to the services provided by all of those others. This agreement, which was signed several months ago, is particularly relevant to women experiencing violence so that when a woman does ring a helpline in a crisis situation she can immediately be transferred to whichever helpline is the most appropriate or is given progressive assistance from three or four or even more of those agencies through the one phone call.

When I first read of this initiative after I became minister, I expressed, I must admit, some concern as to whether this would really much make of a difference, so I tried out this suggestion on some young women, particularly in Cairns. They said that, yes, this would be particularly beneficial because what happens is that sometimes there has been an incident at home, there you are—whether that night or the next day—on your own and sometimes physically feeling bad as well as feeling deserted and without support. You find some number in the crisis to ring. Most often, however, you are not just looking for some support or some information; you are looking for housing, you are looking for accommodation, you are looking maybe for police or legal advice. So the linking of these helpline services will make a difference.

Miss SIMPSON: I would like to ask another question in regard to the Women's Infolink service. In answer to question 9 in response to a non-government question, you have indicated that the Infolink service is currently under review and the intention is to explore ways that it can be extended more effectively to women in regional, rural and remote communities. Could you please outline whether that review is likely to see any closures of the offices where women's information services are currently provided in person, and could you please elaborate as to what types of measures are being considered as a way of extending the services of Infolink?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. I am pleased indeed to tell you where we are up to with this issue at the moment. It is somewhat uncertain because it is important that we have the dialogue about how best to do it. I am sure you are aware, though it was only some four months ago that I came to understand, that there are presently three Women's Infolink offices. These are located in Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast and Townsville. Of course, my reaction was what about the rest of Queensland? Is it just those women then that are going to benefit? Of course, we also know, certainly from your

experience as a long-time member of this parliament and my own, that setting up offices in every town or community around Queensland would be too resource intensive and costly.

Presently what is supplied, of course, to all of Queensland is a free 1800 telephone service and, yes, in line with the figures that I was able to read to you before, there is no doubt that that telephone link has been well received. We, of course, recognise and again take the opportunity to thank Women's Infolink for their good work in providing that statewide information and referral service via the telephone link but still the question remains how can we do it better. Of course, what has happened since Women's Infolink was originally established is that there are now very many more online help services of all kinds. There is much more linking together of the services.

The discussion that I have had with some staff in relation to Women's Infolink is how these linkages of Women's Infolink could be better done with other services or with other sites that already may be the sites that women ring, whether these are other state government agencies or departments or whether they are community organisations. The technology is there now to maybe broaden the impact and the effectiveness of Women's Infolink by providing it as a link through these other services. How exactly that will be accomplished is not decided yet.

It certainly is a matter of importance to those existing staff in those offices. It is not my intention presently to close any of the three offices, though I do signal clearly and firmly that it is my intention to provide a wider ranging service that does particularly reach the needs of women who have less in the way of services than those in Brisbane, on the Sunshine Coast and Townsville and that is women who are really isolated out there. If the dollars are to be limited, then my view is that the dollars would be best spent on providing a better service for those who already have very little, rather than necessarily maintaining a present service to those who have other choices.

Miss SIMPSON: I thank you for your answers in regard to those sections.

Mr MALONE: I refer to non-government question on notice No. 2 and your response that the Rural Living Infrastructure Program finished on 30 June 2004 and that only projects in progress will be eligible to receive subsidy claims over the next year. Can you detail why your department cut this program?

Ms BOYLE: The Rural Living Infrastructure Program has been very popular. I dare say the same happens to you when you visit the local government conferences around the state of Queensland—that is, that councils immediately make it plain what part of the funding programs they have found particularly beneficial. With a number of the programs, of course, coming to an end in 2006, councils have certainly been taking the opportunity to let me know.

Might I remind you that the Rural Living Infrastructure Program is a \$16 million program that was available over four years and that commenced in 2000-01. It was, of course, targeted at local governments with fewer than 15,000 people in their population and targeted at enhancing the quality of life for people living in rural Queensland. That is, of course, where the majority of councils are situated. Many of those rural councils additionally have a limited rate base and consequently are not in a position to really provide many of the special programs and facilities through their rate base and through the Rural Living Infrastructure Program and some other funding programs look for support from the state government.

A total of 93 local governments and 32 Aboriginal and Islander councils are eligible under these rules to apply for funding. The first round of applications closed on 15 September 2000 and the second round of applications closed on 31 July 2002. The funding since then has been rolled out to shires such as Aramac, Badu, Bourke, Etheridge, Nebo, Dalby, Croydon, Roma, Balonne, Wondai—all of the councils that you would hope to see there.

Might I tell you, however popular the program has been, where the problem has arisen is that in the second round of applications, which I mentioned closed on 31 July 2002, there were 100 eligible councils which submitted a total of 222 applications which were worth \$26.8 million. The total requested subsidy was \$12.4 million just from that round. Clearly, we were not able, within the budget for the RLIP program, to fund all of those projects and, in fact, in that round 93 councils were successful and a subsidy of \$7.66 million was allocated for projects worth \$18.7 million.

The RLIP, I am sorry to inform honourable members, has been now fully budgeted and fully allocated. The program is due to end on 30 June 2004 and will be in suspension until the new rounds of funding programs are decided.

The CHAIR: The time allocated for questions by non-government members has expired.

Ms BARRY: I want to stay with the financial assistance grants. I understand that the Local Government Grants Commission recently released the indicative financial assistance grant figures to councils for 2004-05. Can you advise the committee why some councils have experienced changes in their grant outcomes from the last financial year?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you very much for the question. While I am absolutely convinced that the commission does its best to weigh up all of the factors that local government has said should bear on

the size of the grant to a particular council, it nonetheless is very difficult to get that mix exactly right. There are some who are, in any given year, winners and some others who are losers. Each year the commission, of course, updates the data used in its methodology. This in itself can lead to changes in grant outcomes. This year there have been a number of changes or refinements to the methodology. These refinements were the result of the commission's research program which it highlighted in its January 2003 report on the review of its methodology and, more recently, in its 2003 annual report.

The major refinements or changes included in the methodology this year are, firstly, a new rate raising assessment model. The new formula places less reliance on the unimproved capital valuations of council's rateable land by reflecting most council's practice of having a minimum rate per property. The second refinement was an increase in the base allowance for administration expenditure from \$195,000 to \$300,000 for all councils. This is referred to as the economy of scale constant. The third change is changing the way that isolation and remoteness impact on the cost of providing council services. The fourth and final refinement was amending what is called the final scaling to include a 25 per cent weighting on the proportional scaling method used by other states.

This year, 2004-05, is the second year of a four year phase-in or transition to the new methodology that Minister Tuckey did eventually sign off on. The refinements, together with updating data used in the model, was expected to produce some changes for some councils. One of the reasons this government supported the commission's position of a five-year phase-in period for the new methodology was that the commission expected the research program to produce changes in some council grant trends. The research program still has another three years before it is complete. Nonetheless, I have to say to you that from the state's point of view and on behalf of local government it is unfortunate that the Commonwealth would only agree to a four-year phase-in. A five-year phasing in of the new change in methodology would produce smaller changes from one year to the next. While the commission cannot predict how individual councils will fare, nonetheless trend changes will occur as the research is finalised. I am aware already from two councils that they are concerned indeed about the changes of some \$50,000 in their grant this year and that they are discussing this matter quite firmly with the Commonwealth government.

Ms BARRY: Staying with those grants, what role does the state government play in the administration of these grants and particularly what impact does this have on the state budget?

Ms BOYLE: Under the Commonwealth's Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995, each state is required to establish a local government grants commission for the purposes of recommending a distribution of the financial assistance grant. Queensland's Local Government Grants Commission is therefore established under the Queensland Local Government Act 1993 as a statutory body. It is comprised of six members appointed by the Governor in Council. The commission is supported technically and administratively by the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation. The department provides three full-time staff, office accommodation and all other administrative support.

The commission's primary purpose is to make recommendations on the distribution of the Commonwealth financial assistance grant to councils within Queensland. This recommendation is to be in accordance with the national principles as set by the Commonwealth minister, currently the Hon. Senator Jim Lloyd. While the grant itself is Commonwealth funding, all support of the commission, as I did mention to members before, including its establishment, members' fees and operational costs, is borne by the state. For 2002-03 this was some \$460,000, including corporate overheads. Might I mention, however, to honourable members that the Commonwealth does not, so far as Queensland is concerned, play fair. While the Commonwealth requires the distribution of grants within Queensland to be on a policy of horizontal fiscal equalisation, it does not itself use that policy in terms of total distribution to each state. Were they to use their own policy in terms of determining the amount for each state, the estimation is that Queensland local government would do very much better.

This is a matter that has, in fact, been identified again through the Commonwealth government's cost shifting inquiry where one of the recommendations for consideration of their report was that the Commonwealth might decide to distribute their financial assistance grants themselves. At a ministerial council meeting at which the LGAQ and other local government associations were present in Canberra recently, I have to say to you that the enormity of finding a fair way to distribute those grants did seem to be upon the Hon. Minister Senator Ian Campbell and it did not appear at that time as though the Commonwealth was in a rush to try to do better than we have done in terms of fair distribution of those grants. Nonetheless, the Beattie government's position is that it is Commonwealth money and if they wish to distribute it to local government then so they should do, but we will press for Queensland to get its fair share.

Ms BARRY: I want to talk a little bit about the growth in Queensland. Given the extraordinary growth in the property and development market in Queensland, how is your department assisting councils deal with the increased planning workload that comes with it?

Ms BOYLE: It has been a very significant problem for some councils. In one council where it is well known to be a problem the situation is improving. That council is the Gold Coast City Council. As

the member for Cairns and a person who is well aware of the diversity and the good lifestyles that are available to people in the regions of Queensland—the coastal cities and country towns—I have no understanding why those people who come streaming over the border into Queensland for a better life stop just over the border. Of course, some of them should find particular appeal in the Gold Coast or Brisbane, but I hope that some of them will refuel and discover other regions of Queensland where maybe the lifestyle is a little easier.

We are doing our best to help those councils under growth pressures who are finding it very hard to deal with the numbers of applications coming in. Many are experiencing unprecedented numbers of development assessment applications as a result of this boom. Those councils that have their planning scheme, their IPA scheme, in place are finding that there is a eagerness for people to put in development applications that they wish to be considered under the old planning scheme—that is, under the use it or lose it provision that is part of the IPA legislation. The combination of the growth boom and the new scheme with the perception of a need for people in these areas to rush in the applications has put tremendous pressure on planning staff in particular.

What we have done to assist is in a number of areas worked on the development of the electronic lodgment system. That is what we hope to have available Queensland-wide within a matter of years. We are working too on a set of electronic protocols that will ensure that the systems can communicate with each other—that means not only council to council but also council to the department around Queensland. My department has taken a lead role in a project to develop a protocol for the development assessment system. My department has provided assistance and inquiries at a distance as well as in person. This project of assisting councils through the rush now but also taking the view of establishing electronic systems that can back up information for the applicants as well as planners and other council staff is the major initiative that will see the system well in hand years from now, even if the pressures continue in Queensland.

Mr O'BRIEN: Minister, I want to pick up on a line of questioning started by the member for Mirani with regard to the number of IPA planning schemes lodged for formal sign off. How many councils are expected to have completed IPA schemes by the end of the financial year? Do you think that the new deadlines are achievable?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you very much for the question. This is a matter of great importance and increasingly recognised to be so by the broader community. While only 15 of the 123 local governments required to review their planning schemes had new IPA compliance schemes in operation at the end of June 2004, I expect this number to swell to 67 local governments by the end of 2004-05.

This means that 54 per cent of local governments in Queensland will have IPA compliant schemes in operation within the year. I am as confident as is reasonable about this number because of a change in arrangements we have made in terms of dates that are set for the milestones for each local government. While previously we had a blanket date for all local governments of 30 June 2004, we needed to revise this date. The department and local governments decided that it would be best to do this by allowing each local council that has not yet got an IPA scheme in place to set its own milestones for the first state interest check, for its public consultation period and then for its return following the consultation period to the state for final sign off. This means that the milestone dates have been negotiated council by council for the 108 that are yet to be finalised. This means too that those councils at elected member level as well as at officer level have had to have serious discussions, in line with their resourcing and the work yet ahead of them, to determine what these dates should be.

What I realised in the process of negotiating the dates with the councils is that the state has a significant role to play. Through the first state interest check and the second state interest check numbers of state departments are involved in checking the planning schemes. If the state agencies also do not remain on time and deal with the planning schemes in a timely fashion, then it would be unreasonable for us to blame or censure local governments in any way for not meeting their milestones.

Accordingly, I have asked the relevant ministers, through their departments, to support this process and make sure, so far as it is possible, that all local governments of Queensland can meet their dates as now gazetted for the future. This approach will ensure that there is continuing dialogue. I have requested my department provide me with a monthly report on how councils are progressing against their milestone dates. It would appear at this stage at least to be going in a very smooth fashion.

Mr O'BRIEN: I want to pick up on another line of questioning the member for Mirani was pursuing with regard to swimming pool safety laws. How does Queensland swimming pool fencing legislation compare with other states?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. While the member for Mirani is quite right to point out the ways in which the system is not working perfectly yet and where we can do better in terms of training and other things and to protect—we hope—against unnecessary deaths, particularly of children, in residential swimming pools, this is an opportunity for me to make sure that Queenslanders know and that you know that we are doing very well compared with other states in Australia.

The Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit collects and analyses data from a number of Queensland hospitals on behalf of Queensland Health. The unit published a discussion paper in March 2004 entitled *Pool fencing legislation in Australia in 2003: The way forward*. The paper identified the following points. Queensland was the second state in Australia to legislate a high standard of fencing of swimming pools. New South Wales deserves credit as the first, in 1990, and Queensland followed in 1991. However, only Queensland has maintained a high standard of pool fencing to the present time, which, in conjunction with media activity and public awareness, is estimated to have saved the lives of 70 toddlers.

Only Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory require four-sided fencing for new pools—that is, complete isolation of the pool from the house and from neighbours. The rest only require three-sided fencing which allows restricted access from the house to the pool. The Injury Surveillance Unit compared the legislation for new pools and found Queensland ranked second behind the Northern Territory.

Since the paper was published, Queensland has introduced improvements to its pool fencing laws on 1 October 2003 and has introduced the ability for councils to issue on-the-spot fines for faulty fences as of 1 November 2003. These improvements further enhance Queensland's position as one of the best states, one of the leading states, when it comes to effective pool fencing laws.

This position was recently reinforced by the chief executive of the Australian Water Safety Council who wrote to me in May 2004 congratulating the Queensland government on its leadership and on the recent improvements to pool safety laws. The chief executive advised that the new national water safety plan will identify Queensland's pool fencing legislation as best practice nationally. However, in spite of this positive national recognition, I believe pool safety can be further improved and the laws can be made easier for industry and the community. I will be working hard to ensure that councils are implementing the systems to the very best of their ability.

Mr O'BRIEN: Can you tell me what involvement your portfolio of Local Government and Planning has in the work of the Office of Urban Management established under the direction of the Deputy Premier and Treasurer?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. The Office of Urban Management is a very exciting initiative of the Deputy Premier and the Beattie government, coming as it did following the commitment during the campaign leading up to the February re-election of the Beattie government. It is very timely. I do pay my regards to the Deputy Premier for his wise and broad thinking about the development and growth pressures in the south-east corner and this initiative which has been widely welcomed by all of the 18 local governments that are part of the south-east Queensland region. It has been widely welcomed by planners and by the development industry. It has been looked on with considerable interest by the other states of Australia, particularly those associated with the major metropolitan areas.

As expected, there are strong and ongoing linkages between my Local Government and Planning portfolio and the work of the Office of Urban Management under the direction of the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. The office is part of the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation and as such there are administrative and professional linkages between the Local Government and Planning portfolio functions in the department and the Office of Urban Management portfolio functions.

The regional plan for south-east Queensland will have planning and programming impacts that will extend well beyond those of my own Local Government and Planning portfolio. A major focus of the regional plan will be infrastructure plans to service the growth occurring in the region. It is only appropriate that the Deputy Premier and Treasurer have overall responsibility for the plan. However, as he has said, we work as a team.

As Local Government and Planning Minister I am already closely involved in the workings of the Office of Urban Management. My Local Government and Planning portfolio played the major role in establishing the Office of Urban Management. I am also overseeing the preparation of the amendments to the Integrated Planning Act 1997 to facilitate the preparation and implementation of the regional plan.

As Local Government and Planning Minister I will play a major role in the implementation of the regional plan. Local government planning schemes are integral and fundamental to the implementation of a regional plan. My planning portfolio will have responsibility for ensuring that each planning scheme in the region is amended to be consistent with the regional plan when it is finalised both in terms of the land use planning outcomes and the infrastructure planning outcomes of the plan.

One of the key objectives of the regional plan is to establish a regional infrastructure plan that, among other things, will inform the preparation of local government priority infrastructure plans and planning schemes. I hope, therefore, that it is plain that the Office of Urban Management and my own Planning and Local Government portfolio will be complementary and work in partnership.

The CHAIR: The time allocated for government members' question has expired.

Mr MALONE: I refer to attachment 1 of the comparison between 2003-04 actual expenditure and the 2004-05 budget appropriation for grants and subsidies as part of the response to non-government

question on notice No. 1. As I understand it, the Smaller Communities Assistance Program has been fully allocated and the final approval funding for completed projects will be paid out in 2004-05. This has been such an important program for our rural communities. Do you have any intention of allocating new money to this program?

Ms BOYLE: This is one of the really important questions I am being asked as I travel around the state and meet with councils. I am not able—I wish I was—to give you yes as the answer. The reason I am not able to is indeed a good one and one that I have expressed to local governments. As you mentioned in your question, all of the money for this 10-year program has been allocated. That is so for some of the other capped programs under the grants and assistance measures that we provide. Most of those capped programs will either come to an end now or by the end of June 2006.

As we had informed the Local Government Association of Queensland and local councils, we see this as a time rather than extending each of the programs individually to different dates to really put out the whole range of funding programs that we have and ask for comments from them as to which ones should remain in their existing form, which ones should remain but maybe should be adjusted, which ones have fulfilled their purpose and may not need either to continue or need as much in the way of funding to continue and ask local governments about the kinds of programs that they see that we might offer that we are not presently offering. This consultation will take place.

Presently we are reviewing the effectiveness of the programs to date internally, and we look forward later this year to releasing information for consultation purposes to local governments. Nonetheless, your point is well made. The Smaller Communities Assistance Program—a 10-year program with a budget of \$150 million—has been well used and now fully allocated. The Smaller Communities Assistance Program of course was targeted for communities with a population of less than 5,000 people and particularly targeted at subsidising water supply and sewerage infrastructure essential to maintaining basic public health and wellbeing. My impression of the programs that I have signed off on since becoming minister under the SCAP heading is that these are programs whereby, because of the small number of people living in the area, it is unlikely that the council would ever be able to fund the sophisticated level of sewerage and water supply infrastructure that they are now able to have. On a per capita basis, it is far in advance of what the council would supply on its own. Yes, I do hear the strong wish from local governments and your implicit request for the SCAP program to continue.

Mr MALONE: Minister, under the same heading I refer to the \$600,000 less allocated to the Security Improvement Program in 2004-05. What was the basis for this decision? Will you provide an indication of how many local governments have accessed funding from this program since its inception? Has there been a problem with the take-up because perhaps the guidelines or the criteria is too strict, because it is really an important program for safety particularly in our inner-city areas throughout Queensland?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you very much for the question. The Security Improvement Program is another of the popular programs. I think the difficulty for me in the consultation with local governments will not be about so much which programs to keep but whether or not there are any that they will be prepared to let go of. The Security Improvement Program has indeed been popular. Presently, it is written to provide a subsidy of up to 60 per cent to local governments for works to improve public safety in existing public places, including assistance for councils to undertake proper planning and initial investigation of proposed projects. Those are, therefore, reasonably wide objectives and guidelines for the program. The difficulty has arisen again in that the program has been very popular.

An amount of \$2 million per annum is allocated to the program, and this program of course commenced originally as a pilot in 1998-99. There was one round of funding in 2003-04 which closed in July 2003. In all, 33 local governments applied for funding under that round and they applied for funding for 51 projects in total which would have cost \$5.1 million in total. Their subsidy requests amounted to \$2.24 million. In fact, subsidies of \$1.973 million were allocated for 44 projects in 30 local government areas. For this round, the amount available for allocation from the budget was supplemented by savings in projects approved in previous rounds which were completed under budget. This allowed more projects to be supported than would otherwise have been the case. The last three funding rounds were heavily oversubscribed so there were no budget funds left unallocated. The number of applications received seems to indicate a growing interest in participating in the program, especially from smaller local governments. I do have in front of me the allocations for last year under the Security Improvement Program. They were under the budget \$2.821 million whereas the actual expenditure to 30 June was \$2.513 million. The estimated appropriation for 2004-05 is \$1.889 million. With regard to the reason for those different figures, I will ask the director-general, Dr Campbell, to address.

Dr Campbell: The allocation for that program is approximately \$2 million a year, but it is demand driven and we pay it out on that. So that is the difference in the figures.

Mr MALONE: Minister, I refer to your response to non-government question on notice No. 1 which relates to internal audits conducted by the department. On the first page of the task completed there was an audit report in January 2004 on the recent local government elections. Given the difficulty some rural councils have in attracting candidates as well as the impact of councillors having to resign to

nominate for the position of mayor, what is your department doing to address this issue? Maybe I should explain that, as you well know, we have problems in terms of retaining the knowledge base within some of our councils. Obviously if a councillor then stands as mayor and is defeated, we lose that knowledge base from local government. Has your department looked at ways and means of retaining that knowledge base somehow or other through some other process?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. It is a difficult one to address, and I am not convinced that we necessarily have the best solution that we can find to that problem. There were two councils this year in fact that did not have enough candidates to fill all of the positions available at the local government elections. I have to say that this is not entirely bad news, however. My perspectives on those two councils—Wondai and Tambo—is that one of the reasons for that is that those councils are very stable and have been doing a very good job and to that extent there was not political disquiet in the broader communities of Tambo and Wondai. Maybe that is why there was not a rush of hands go up to fill the councillor positions.

Nonetheless, some of the rural councils have raised with me that issue that you do now—that is, that when an experienced councillor stands for mayor it is sad indeed that maybe if that councillor is not successful in being elected as mayor that it is a pity to lose that person's expertise. Where the problem arises is this: we do in Queensland believe that it is best to identify the mayoral ticket as a separate ticket to the council, and I stand by that system. The mayor does carry much greater responsibilities and additionally the time impost on mayors is considerably greater than that of the time impost on councillors. The expertise issue is another of the factors that must be taken into account in having a separate ticket for mayor. The system as I understand it in Victoria does not do this. It is a matter of electing councillors and then electing a mayor from the number of councillors elected.

Where our problem comes in then is that if you were able to stand as both a councillor and for mayor at the time of a Queensland local government election we would be forcing, as it were, a by-election upon the council in order to fill the then vacant position whether of mayor or councillor. That would mean all of the rigmarole and cost of another local government election for that shire or city council. There is not, therefore, an easy solution to this matter. What I have already proposed particularly to country councils is a stronger campaign to really bring to the attention of the residents of those council areas the power and importance of local government and the tremendous satisfaction as well as the challenges and difficulties in serving as a councillor on the shire. It may be that we can do more to promote the importance of their work as well as to support proper remuneration for the task.

Mr MALONE: It is certainly not an easy question, Minister. I take on board the response to a question from the government members in relation to use of grey water and your commitment to the use of that I assume means that you would support the Toowoomba pipeline. You can comment on that later. Minister, in relation to your government's recent commitment to legislate to allow grey water to be used to water gardens via an underground irrigation system, will your department be providing councils with any funding to provide training to officers for the application of this legislation? Will householders be able to apply for a subsidy to install a grey water system as is the case in Victoria as I understand it?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. We are busy of course with working on the legislation that will make these systems possible in Queensland. As we are doing so, we are getting more and more information about what the costs might be although the picture is still not entirely clear. We have reassured local councils that, yes, we will be responsible for providing training as this is a matter that will be implemented, quite properly in my view, through local councils. They are the ones of course that have the ability and the knowledge locally to govern the system. For example, some of the matters on which they have knowledge that my department does not is the soil type and the suitability for different kinds of systems in that area, in high rainfall areas and different climatic zones of Queensland. Nonetheless, that training is important in cost and in content and it will be a significant responsibility of my department.

You are right, however, that there is going to be a cost to residents in putting such systems in and that it is appropriate that the government encourage those systems to go in despite the cost. How we might do that and whether through some kind of rebate system is not to my knowledge decided at this point. Might I say to you that our particular concentration is going to be on new housing estates in the first instance. This is where the cost of installing the system at the time of creating the subdivision and building the houses will be much lower than it will be in all likelihood in installing it house by house in existing settled areas. The best information that I have at this stage is that the cost per household in a new residential subdivision may be around \$700 whereas the cost of installing it in an existing residential area to just one house as it were in a street or in a suburb may well be double that amount.

It has been so in other areas such as solar hot water systems that because of the environmental benefit of solar hot water systems a subsidy scheme was developed but that was through the Environmental Protection Agency and the Minister for the Environment. In terms of the water savings that are likely to flow from the roll-out of grey water reuse systems—or I hope will flow from the roll-out of grey water reuse systems—across the state of Queensland as the years go on, the benefit could be considered to go directly to the portfolio of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and it may be

therefore that the minister may wish to consider some subsidy of grey water installation systems at a later date. It is, however, in the first instance incumbent upon my department to get that legislation in place and to identify the likely costs and the availability of systems and the impacts prior to proceeding further.

Mr MALONE: Minister, page 5 of the MPS details the government's commitment to waste water treatment projects. With the current price of potable water at around at least \$1,000 a megalitre, the use of grey water is certainly a way of not only saving water but certainly saving lots of dollars. Also, the use of rainwater tanks is also a good means of water efficiency. Has your department looked at any incentives that may be put in place to offer people the opportunity to install rainwater tanks for use in their household or on their gardens particularly?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you for the question. It is not one that I am able to address. I will ask the director-general whether he is able to assist on that topic or otherwise to offer you some information after the hearing.

Dr Campbell: We are not looking at any direct incentives for the use of tanks at this stage.

Mr MALONE: It is interesting, Minister, in respect of the Gold Coast council's difficulty as I understand it of obtaining permission from Queensland Health to install rainwater tanks in the growth corridor there at Coomera. I believe that Queensland Health is not a big fan of rainwater tanks because of health issues, but I have to say that for many of our generation the best water we had was rainwater. We were quite lucky sometimes even to have that. From my position, I think that we probably need to look at utilising rainwater to a greater extent. I know that the Department of Health has said that there are some problems with that. However, in some areas that is probably the best water they have. What is your response to that? What is your attitude?

Ms BOYLE: Thank you very much for that statement. When I came into this portfolio, I held a similar view. I could not understand why my department was not rushing to get rainwater systems in place and water tanks and solar hot water heaters and changes to house designs to make them more sustainable in the long term. What I have discovered with regard to rainwater tanks, which makes the story more difficult, is that it is a different story, from a health point of view, than in country areas and in the years when you and I grew up. Today in metropolitan areas or cities, I am told, we have problems that we did not have when you and I were young. There are many planes flying overhead and apparently, through fuel particles and dust in the air, they contribute considerable pollution to the roofs of houses and potentially to rainwater tanks. Smog and industrial gases in the air can also contribute to particles settling into the water.

Another change is the high standard that is expected in society for health control and the liability a government could face if it dared to bring in a system without suitable health controls and allowed people the freedom they had 40 or so years ago to set these systems in place for themselves.

Mr MALONE: I understand, Minister, that the first flush of water off a roof can be directed elsewhere and actually cleans the roof before the rest of the water goes into the tank. Systems like that are available.

Ms BOYLE: That system is one that should be investigated further and I undertake to do so.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. The time allocated for questions from non-government members has expired.

Mrs SMITH: Minister, you referred earlier to the year 2005 as the centenary of women's suffrage in Queensland. What does the government plan to do to recognise the centenary of women obtaining the right to vote in Queensland?

Ms BOYLE: We intend to do as much as we can, all over the state, as often as we can and to make it a year of amazing celebration of women's suffrage in Queensland. I hope that all good men and women will participate in it. I am keen to ensure that there are many celebrations but that they are not simply reminders of the history of women and their right to vote in the state of Queensland. I am keen to ensure that they are conducted in such a way as to signal the further changes that might need to be made so far as gender balance issues are concerned and/or to leave in place some gift or benefit that will assist people in future times. Therefore, it will not simply be a large, Queensland-wide party. It will have more substance.

In order to work out a program of events, I have established a task force to assist in the planning and implementation of a range of activities. The task force will provide the government with advice on appropriate ways to commemorate the centenary and will ensure that the struggle of indigenous women, who did not get the right to vote until 60 years later, is properly recognised. The task force is comprised of representatives from local and state governments, indigenous women, women's organisations and academia. The inaugural meeting of the task force was held in Brisbane on 22 June and was chaired by me. I regard it as an important project and therefore I will be keen to continue chairing the task force.

The activities suggested to date include giving International Women's Day celebrations a centenary theme and distributing resources on the centenary throughout the state. However, the government is keen to hear the ideas of Queensland's women and men on how to commemorate the centenary. We will be posting some questions about this on the government's Consult Queensland web site.

I have discovered the story of the women's vote in Queensland and the heroism and commitment of the leader of the movement in Queensland, Mrs Emma Miller. I have discovered myself to be a big fan of hers. After successfully obtaining the vote for Queensland women, despite being aged in her sixties—and you could forgive her for being a bit tired after the years of struggle—she said, 'Life has only just begun.' Until her dying day, she fought hard for the rights of women and men in the state of Queensland.

The CHAIR: That concludes the examination of the estimates for the portfolio of the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women. It also concludes the committee's consideration of the matters referred to it by the parliament. I thank the minister and her advisors for their attendance. A transcript of this part of the hearing will be available on the Hansard Internet quick access web site within two hours. Before I conclude, on behalf of the committee, I thank the Hansard staff, the time keepers and the attendants. I declare the public hearing closed.

Committee adjourned at 7.05 p.m.