

FRIDAY, 17 JULY 2009

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D—MAIN ROADS

Estimates Committee D Members

Ms G Grace (Chair)
Mr AP Cripps
Mr MW Choi
Mr CJ Foley
Ms JH Jarratt
Ms FS Simpson
Hon. DM Wells

In Attendance

Hon. CA Wallace, Minister for Main Roads
Mr L Spencer, Principal Advisor
Department of Transport and Main Roads
Mr D Stewart, Director-General
Mr L Ford, Chief Operations Officer
Ms M Smith, Assistant Director

Committee met at 9.00 am

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare the hearing of Estimates Committee D open. On behalf of the committee, I welcome to the hearing the minister, departmental officers, officers of statutory bodies and members of the public. I am Grace Grace, the member for Brisbane Central and chair of the committee. Ms Fiona Simpson MP, the member for Maroochydore, is the deputy chair. The other committee members are Mr Andrew Cripps MP, member for Hinchinbrook; Mr Michael Choi MP, member for Capalaba; Mr Chris Foley MP, member for Maryborough; Ms Jan Jarratt MP, member for Whitsunday; and the Hon. Dean Wells MP, member for Murrumba. The committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2009 for organisational units within the portfolio areas of the Minister for Main Roads and the Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs. The committee will examine the portfolio areas in that order.

The committee will suspend proceedings for the following periods of time: morning tea from 10.30 am to 11 am; lunch from 12 pm till 1 pm; and afternoon tea from 2.50 pm to 3.20 pm. In the event that those attending today are not aware, the committee's proceedings are lawful proceedings and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the Queensland parliament. Members of the public are welcome to observe the proceedings but may not participate in the proceedings. In that regard, and in accordance with standing order 206, any person admitted to this hearing may be excluded by order of the committee or at my discretion as the chair. I also remind members, witnesses and members of the public that no food or drink is permitted to be consumed in the Legislative Council chamber.

The committee has resolved, in relation to media coverage of the hearing, that television film coverage, photographs and sound broadcast be allowed for the chair's opening comments and the introductory statements of each minister and that television, film and photographic coverage be allowed at the change of organisational units being examined. The committee has also resolved that audio and video of the hearing recorded by Parliamentary Service cameras and microphones in the Legislative Council chamber shall be broadcast by the Parliamentary Service via the service's website and to receivers throughout the parliamentary precinct. I ask that all mobile phones and pagers be now switched off.

I remind members of the committee and the minister that under standing orders the time limit for questions is one minute. Answers are to be no longer than three minutes. A single chime will give a 15-second warning and a double chime will sound at the end of each time limit. An extension of time may be given with the consent of the questioner. A double chime will sound two minutes after an extension of time has been given. Standing orders require that at least half of the time available for questioning at today's hearing be allocated to non-government members. Any time expended when the committee deliberates in private is to be equally apportioned between government and non-government members. The committee has resolved that non-committee members be given leave to attend to ask questions during the hearing today. To assist Hansard, officers are asked to provide their names and positions prior to responding to a question referred to them by the minister.

I declare open for examination the proposed expenditure for organisational units within the portfolio of the Minister for Main Roads. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, under standing order 177 you are able to make an opening statement of no longer than five minutes. Minister, would you like to make a brief introductory statement or do you wish to proceed direct to questioning?

Mr WALLACE: I will make a statement, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is a privilege to be the main roads minister in Queensland because it means that I am involved in issues that I am passionate about: creating and sustaining jobs for Queenslanders and keeping our state connected. As a regional minister proudly from Townsville and North Queensland, I know well how important it is that we keep generating and retaining jobs. We have been hit by far too many job losses, especially in North Queensland. I understand the significance of our road network to regional Queenslanders to stay connected to their local communities, to their loved ones around the state and to the people they do business with. I remember when I was a kid travelling from my home town of Home Hill to Townsville. We would go there once or twice a year travelling over single-lane wooden bridges on the Bruce Highway. Things have changed, but still we can do it better.

The Bligh government is investing a record \$18.2 billion Capital Works Program this year, a program that will support some 127,000 jobs and build the infrastructure we need for our growing population. Our government went to the March election on a platform of protecting and creating jobs, a real challenge in these tough economic times. I am proud to say that Main Roads is delivering on this commitment through yet another record capital works program this financial year which is an enormous boost to jobs, particularly in regional Queensland. Our record \$3.53 billion allocation in roads capital investment will sustain jobs for about 30,000 Queenslanders in these tough economic times whilst tackling the impact of urban growth, a rising population and, importantly, road safety.

Much of the funding will be directed towards major infrastructure projects already underway that will help Queensland meet the economic downturn ahead in a bid to continue driving growth throughout our state—projects like the massive \$1.88 billion Gateway upgrade project that will deliver 20 kilometres of new motorway and a second bridge crossing for motorists. I am enormously pleased today to advise the committee that seven kilometres of this new motorway will open to traffic this weekend. Early Sunday morning the first cars will begin to travel on this motorway which will greatly improve travel north of the Gateway Bridge and remove through traffic from the existing Gateway arterial road. Immediately following today's hearing I will be travelling to this piece of road to inspect it ahead of it opening to traffic.

I am sure many members of the committee are aware of the accident on the Gateway last night involving a cattle truck. Fortunately the driver of the truck was not seriously injured. However, this is the second serious heavy vehicle accident on this particular section of the motorway in just a few weeks. Due to there being two accidents in such a short space of time, I have instructed an immediate review of the independent safety audit carried out before this temporary alignment opened to traffic. While the safety audit found the new alignment has been designed in accordance with design standards for traffic travelling at 60 kilometres per hour, I want to ensure that there is nothing more that needs to be done so that accidents like this do not happen again. It is important to remember that over 90 per cent of accidents on our roads are caused by human error. In the meantime, I urge motorists to stick to the speed limit, drive to the conditions and observe changed traffic conditions, be it on that section of road or be it across the state. I have also called on the police to patrol this area to enforce this 60 kilometre an hour speed limit in order to avoid accidents like this occurring again.

The Auditor-General recently tabled a report into the management of urban congestion in South-East Queensland. The Auditor-General made a number of recommendations and the newly merged Department of Transport and Main Roads is already working to implement these recommendations. The merger of the former department of main roads and Queensland Transport into one entity is one step in the right direction of better information sharing across roads and transport planners. We acknowledge

that building more roads or providing more buses and trains will not alone ease congestion. We need to work together to develop a strategy that addresses all of the ways in which we can improve road and transport solutions for the people of South-East Queensland.

The south-east corner continues to experience rapid population growth, and this puts pressure on our roads and transport system. An interesting point is that car vehicle growth is actually higher than population growth at the moment in the south-east corner. Managing urban traffic growth and its impacts is a strategic priority for our government. A number of key areas have been identified to improve travel time reliability on our roads. These include land use and planning; travel demand management measures such as road pricing; travel options such as walking, cycling and public transport; efficiency measures such as transit and bus lanes; improved management of incidences as they occur; and capacity. During the election campaign we committed \$12.3 million to a fast incident response plan to make further improvements to how we respond to incidents. We are delivering on this election commitment and we continue to roll out this plan. Commuters can expect to see further slashes in incident response times. The Bligh government is committed to planning infrastructure in advance of growth demand. Significant challenges lie ahead of us as we continue to respond to growing pressures on our road network.

CHAIR: The first period of questioning is allocated to non-government members. I call the member for Maroochydore.

Ms SIMPSON: The average family is facing about a \$300 hike in the cost of running their cars thanks to your government's registration hike and the removal of the petrol tax rebate. In my question on notice No. 16 I asked if your government was investigating putting new tolls on existing and new roads. You refused to rule it out. Is this the next big slug motorists can expect?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Maroochydore for the question. This government has a policy in place for single tolling, but any proper transport planning organisation around the world needs to ensure that they are looking at the various options. Director-General Stewart, am I correct in saying that there are organisations in this state looking at different forms of tolling for the south-east corner?

Mr Stewart: Recently we have seen submissions put forward by the RACQ, and I am happy to provide this submission to Infrastructure Australia. RACQ has been a strong advocate for cordon tolling and road pricing. It is not the only organisation that has been pushing these matters forward. For example, if you go back into the Brisbane City Council transport plans there has been very clear discussion on cordon pricing or road pricing. I think most recently Lord Mayor Campbell Newman in his transport plan actually showed that the council had considered these forms of road pricing moving forward, but it actually did discount them. That was a very important statement. I think the other thing to point out is that the Queensland government has a very clear policy on tolling. That policy is for toll roads for single pieces of infrastructure. That is the current government policy. That has been relayed to many organisations such as the Brisbane City Council, which has been delivering projects like the north-south bypass tunnel.

Mr WALLACE: Using tolling.

Mr Stewart: Yes, using tolling, and those rules actually apply to the Airport Link project, as they have on the Gateway Motorway. I think a very important distinction on the government's current policy is that there must be a free alternate road. That is the government's current policy. But you need to look at recent academic history. The issue of road pricing is there. It is a very commonly discussed aspect. We have seen international examples of these issues. But I must say that the Queensland government's current policy is on road tolling on single projects like the Gateway Motorway, like the Logan Motorway, like the north-south bypass tunnel, like Airport Link. That is a very clear policy direction of this government at this point in time.

Mr WALLACE: It would be very inappropriate for my department not to be investigating all options when they are put up by organisations like the RACQ. We need to be looking at those options and examining all options that assist in our road network. But I want to make it clear, clear, clear, as Mr Stewart has done, that this government does not have a policy of abandoning those project type tollings, such as for the Gateway. That is helping to pay for that massive \$1.88 billion project, a project that will save travel time by about 15 minutes for people using that motorway.

Ms SIMPSON: So the answer is, yes, you are looking at putting tolls on existing roads that do not currently have tolls on them?

Mr WALLACE: No. The answer was clearly no, member for Maroochydore. The answer is that we will investigate those options put forward by groups like the RACQ because that is the right thing to do. I will table that document that Mr Stewart referred to. As I said, it would be highly irresponsible of this government not to examine all proposals put forward to it by groups like the RACQ. One only has to ask across this state about the contribution that the RACQ makes to this state. It is a highly respected organisation. We will examine the options that it has put forward to us. It is important that my department continues to do that.

CHAIR: Would you mind seeking leave for the tabling of that document?

Mr WALLACE: I seek leave to table that document. My apologies, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Mr WALLACE: The state government tolling framework guides the application of tolling for the road network in Queensland. The framework provides seven key economic, commercial, planning and equity conditions around approvals for tolling, as the Brisbane City Council sought, so that government can continue to provide an efficient road network and to ensure that community interests are protected. The contribution of tolling to improving Queensland's road network through the early delivery of roads is unquestioned. However, as part of the Queensland government's commitment to evaluating growth and management solutions for Queensland's busy roads, the application of tolling to further contribute to transport outcomes is being investigated. As I said, the RACQ has suggested that we do that.

In fact, the RACQ president has told a national toll road conference that charging motorists to use new city bypass roads is not an effective solution to Brisbane traffic congestion. Instead, having a comprehensive non-tolled ring-road system and then charging motorists to use city roads when they become congested is the RACQ's suggestion. It would be highly irresponsible for my department not to examine all of those options. In this regard the department continues to explore world's best practice in tolling and innovative tolling strategies involving distance, time and travel, vehicle occupancy and carbon emissions. It would be irresponsible, as I said, of the department not to do so.

Internationally a number of jurisdictions utilise a variety of tolling systems different to the current point based toll roads on the Gateway and Logan motorways adopted in Brisbane. These applications include toll roads with high-occupancy toll lanes in the United States, toll cordons in London, area charging in Singapore and kilometre charging in Germany. I seek leave to table some documents from the Brisbane City Council and the Lord Mayor's suggestion that the council, too, has considered different tolling on its local roads. So it is doing the responsible thing in considering those particular options, and that is what good transport planners do.

CHAIR: Standing order 183 provides that a minister may table a document with leave of the committee. Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, you are ready to table other people's submissions, but will you table the studies and investigations your department has already undertaken particularly into distance based tolling on existing motorways where there are not tolls in place, where people currently can get on and off sections of the motorway and are not tolled? Will you table these reports and studies?

Mr WALLACE: As part of our 2031 strategy for transport options in South-East Queensland, we are examining those particular options, those particular studies, and they will be considered as part of the measures to draw up—

Ms SIMPSON: So you will not release them. You will release everybody else's submissions but not your own.

Mr WALLACE: Madam Chair, that is very rude.

CHAIR: Would the member allow the minister to answer the question?

Mr WALLACE: No final reports have been completed. I cannot see how we can table something which as I was saying is being produced.

Ms SIMPSON: You have done extensive modelling. You have commissioned research. Minister, will you at least tell the committee about the commissioned research and what has been done and table that documentation?

CHAIR: I ask the member to cease interjecting. I think the minister is trying to answer your question. You have now fielded a second question. Minister, will you proceed with answering the first question?

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, Madam Chair, for your protection. No final reports have been presented to me for my decision. As such, these are works in progress. It would be like presenting to someone a half-baked cake for dessert at dinner. You would not do it. The member for Maroochydore is being very, very unreasonable in this regard. Connecting SEQ 2031 will be an important document for the government to help plan the growth in South-East Queensland.

Since the release of the original South East Queensland Integrated Regional Transport Plan in 1997 our region has changed significantly. There has been sustained population growth and significant new challenges have emerged. These include the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in response to climate change, the dwindling supply and increasing price of oil, increasing congestion which impacts on quality of life and economic growth, and increasing costs to provide transport infrastructure and services. That is why this plan Connecting SEQ 2031: An Integrated Regional Transport Plan for South East Queensland will help address these challenges. So we are working on a very important document. Taking this information suggested by groups like the RACQ into account means that we need to look at all of these particular options. The 2031 plan will help inform my department and help inform government of the best way to take it forward.

I responded to your question, Ms Simpson, about tolling. I advised you and the committee that the department has not finalised modelling of these innovative congestion measures for any of our roads, nor has any decision been made to recommend implementation of these measures on new or existing South-East Queensland roads. I do not want to give something to this committee that is half baked, that is not ready. We need to be looking at these planning documents and using them in our planning exercises. That is very important. Director-General Stewart, did you want to add anything?

Mr Stewart: I want to reiterate a point that was made in a previous—

CHAIR: Thank you. We need to move on. Minister, would you like to ask for an extension of time to answer that question with the questioner's okay?

Mr WALLACE: Could I get an extension?

Ms SIMPSON: No. I would like to ask another question. It relates to the issue that the minister is referring to. Minister, you say that it is all about congestion management, yet your government is selling Queensland Motorways. Your government will be conducting asset sales and Queensland Motorways is part of those asset sales. I put it to you that your investigation of bulking up the way that money can be earned from the motorway is not about congestion management; it is about a return on that asset. It is about finding another way to milk the motorist. Minister, you have done extensive modelling. Dates have been floated within the department about the introduction of distance based tolling and gantries to tax motorists on the motorways where they are not currently taxed. Isn't it time your government came clean about another slug on motorists?

Mr WALLACE: This study involves the whole of South-East Queensland—from the Sunshine Coast to the Gold Coast, to the Brisbane urban area to the western corridor to Ipswich. That is what this study involves. It is an extensive study of all of South-East Queensland. It is a very, very important plan that will help plan the way that we roll out transport and road infrastructure in this city until the year 2031. So I reject that assertion from the member for Maroochydore that we are drawing up this plan to funnel traffic on to the Gateway. What nonsense. What utter rot.

Ms SIMPSON: No, you will have a rat run beside the motorway because they will not want to pay taxes on sections that they do not currently pay taxes on now.

Mr WALLACE: Madam Chair, what utter rot.

CHAIR: Let us proceed.

Mr WALLACE: We are planning for the whole of South-East Queensland and I make no apologies for doing that. We need to make sure that we get transport and road options right across the fastest growing region of the state. When looking at congestion in South-East Queensland, it is not just about the tollways such as the Gateway or the Logan Motorway; it is about looking at the total picture. It is about looking at the western corridor to Ipswich, where we are spending close to \$3 billion on important roadworks to help free up traffic. It is looking at transport options on the Gold Coast, where we are spending significant sums on the Pacific Highway and the Gold Coast Highway to free up bus flow and traffic flow on those two highways. It is looking at how we do things smarter on our existing roads as well, utilising the current assets that we have in South-East Queensland to ensure that vehicles travel at optimal speeds.

Part of that is our open roads policy, which has seen us make significant inroads into clearing vehicle accidents that cause around 25 per cent of congestion in South-East Queensland. What we have seen since we have started rolling out that strategy is an important step forward in reducing the time it takes to get rid, if you like, of vehicle accidents. There has been an over 40 per cent decrease in the time it takes to remove those accidents, and that time will improve as we roll out further initiatives such as the heavy vehicle recovery units to get rid of those big vehicles when they cause an accident on our roads.

I reject the member for Maroochydore's assertion that we are planning somehow to funnel traffic on to the Gateway and Logan motorways as some sort of cash cow. That is absolutely incorrect. We are planning for better roads for the whole of South-East Queensland. Our policy on tolling provides free alternatives to ensure that if people do not want to pay a toll there are always free alternatives that they can use.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, what was the debt on the Logan Motorway at the end of the previous financial year and what is it this year?

Mr WALLACE: As I said, having tolling infrastructure in place is helping us to roll out a better road system in South-East Queensland. This \$1.88 billion upgrade to the Gateway, which will save about 15 minutes travel time for people using that infrastructure, will make it safer and enable the gross number of vehicles to increase, is important. To fund that we will raise tolls by CPI but we will also charge vehicles using those motorways to help pay for brand new infrastructure. In doing so, we will carry some debt forward for infrastructure such as the Logan Motorway. If my memory serves me correct, Director-General, we are still paying the debt on the motorway on the Sunshine Coast as the tolls on that motorway were abolished by the previous conservative government.

Mr Stewart: That debt has been added to the Queensland Motorways books.

Mr WALLACE: So it has been added. That is very interesting. We are still carrying that debt forward for that piece of infrastructure. So Queensland Motorways is paying that debt as part of its payments each year. We do have a debt in Main Roads, debt that was incurred originally to supplement general roads funds and to construct the Gateway Motorway in the eighties. Debt has also been used in a number of ways to fund specific capital infrastructure such as the Tugun bypass, the Pacific Motorway and the South East Busway. Mr Stewart, do you want to talk about some of that debt profile?

Mr Stewart: Thank you, Minister.

Ms SIMPSON: Specifically the Logan Motorway.

Mr Stewart: One of the key reasons that we have had to carry a higher level of debt to build these important infrastructure projects, which I think people would recognise are needed—I do not think anyone here would question the investment that is happening on the Gateway Motorway, the Logan Motorway, the Ipswich Motorway—is the lack of funding that we have received from the Australian government on these projects. That has been a significant issue for us. If you look at the contribution of the Australian government to the Gateway Motorway, I am not sure but my understanding is that the actual funds provided by the Australian government up until recently have been of a minute amount compared to the costs of that project—\$1.88 billion, which has been funded predominantly by the Queensland taxpayer.

We have to continue to deliver these important infrastructure projects. The toll revenue on Queensland Motorways provides a revenue stream to pay that debt back. It is important that we continue to do that. These projects are essential for urban congestion. The minister has already outlined the urban congestion process. But one of the key components is building capacity, and we must continue to build capacity not only for—

CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms SIMPSON: I note my question was not answered which is what the debt was on the Logan Motorway.

Mr WALLACE: I will take that on notice and get you that specific figure.

Ms SIMPSON: Thank you. Minister, yesterday you announced that the toll booths for the Gateway and Logan motorways would be closed from next Wednesday due to 'the successful take-up of go via payment options during the past few weeks'. Minister, as it is clear many motorists have had substantial delays both online and over the phone to access go via, how can you be proud of the introduction of this poorly planned and managed system?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Maroochydore for the question. She does not want to save motorists 10 minutes travel time on that bridge. She does not want motorists being safe as they weave from lane to lane working out which toll booth they need to go to. She wants to place motorists' lives at risk in doing so. I note her 'Chicken Little' comments at the beginning of the month when she said we had delayed free-flow tolling. That is absolutely incorrect. This has been a successful scheme. Indeed, since early July, 44,000 South-East Queenslanders have signed up for go via tags.

Mr Stewart: My parents, living at Maroochydore.

Mr WALLACE: The director-general's parents, living at Maroochydore, have signed up for a tag. In the last six weeks 155,000 South-East Queenslanders have signed up for go via tags. You cannot say that this has been poorly planned or slipshod in any manner when 155,000 South-East Queenslanders have signed up for tags. The numbers speak for themselves.

We have introduced this free-flow tolling not only to save travel time on our motorways—it will save about 10 minutes travel time once the cash booths are fully removed—but also to make it safer for motorists, as I said earlier, who use that network. We know that motorists sometimes get confused about which lane to get in: 'Do I get into the tag line? Do I get into the cash line?' Then once they got into the cash line, fiddling around for change was causing congestion and adding to safety concerns on that particular network. That is why we have introduced free-flow tolling and we are using world-class technology to do it—some of the best technology in the world.

CHAIR: The next round of questioning will be from government members, and I will ask the first question. The answer to government question on notice No. 4 provides details in relation to the Gateway upgrade project. I note that the minister referred in his opening statement to the forthcoming opening of the northern diversion section of this project. Can the minister provide the committee with further details about this opening?

Mr WALLACE: Thank you. I can, and this is an exciting project for the people of South-East Queensland. You would appreciate that, Madam Chair, because a number of your constituents would use this piece of infrastructure and will be delighted to see this opening.

The Bligh government's \$1.88 billion Gateway upgrade project involves construction of a second Gateway Bridge, upgrades to the 12 kilometres of the Gateway Motorway south of the Brisbane River and construction of seven kilometres of new motorway north of the Gateway Bridge to Nudgee Road. A key feature of the project is progressive openings, where each separate stage of the project will be open to traffic as it is completed, ensuring motorists benefit from the project sooner.

Motorists have already benefited from other early works on the project, including two additional southbound lanes which now provide a total of four lanes from the Port of Brisbane on-ramp to Wynnum Road, improved alignment for the Port of Brisbane on-ramp, a double off-ramp from the Gateway Motorway to Wynnum Road, a continuous third lane from the Gateway toll plaza at the Lytton Road overpass to the Port of Brisbane on-ramp and a third southbound lane over Wynnum Road.

As I said earlier, I am pleased to announce today that the new seven-kilometre motorway north of the Gateway Bridge to Nudgee Road is scheduled to open to traffic in the early hours of Sunday morning, 19 July. Immediately after today's hearing, I will be going to inspect this new section of the motorway before traffic begins travelling on it. Longer and with more lanes than the CLEM7 tunnel, this new motorway will greatly improve north-south travel—

Mr Stewart: Without the height restrictions.

Mr WALLACE: Yes, without the height restrictions, unlike the CLEM7 tunnel. It will also remove through traffic from the existing Gateway arterial road. The new motorway includes 17 bridge structures, with the longest being the new 740-metre bridge that crosses the Kedron Brook flood plain. The new motorway will provide six lanes in total—three lanes for northbound traffic and three lanes for southbound traffic. It will help alleviate traffic congestion on the existing Gateway Motorway and offer enhanced access to the city, Eagle Farm and Pinkenba areas for motorists travelling northbound via a new off-ramp to Kingsford Smith Drive. The southbound on-ramp at Kingsford Smith Drive will open in mid-2010 to tie in with the opening of the Gateway Bridge. As part of the staged construction, the new motorway will provide a more direct route between the Gateway Bridge and Nudgee Road. Further benefits will be realised when the new motorway is connected with the Brisbane Airport Corporation's new access road, which is due for completion towards the end of 2009, and the new Gateway Bridge opening in 2010.

Mr Stewart: I understand that the northern access from the Brisbane Airport Corporation is ahead of schedule.

Mr WALLACE: That is excellent. That will be a great new access into the airport for the residents using that particular road. Until then, motorists will need to continue using the existing Gateway Motorway to access the airport, and there will be signs advising motorists of this.

Ms JARRATT: The answer to government question on notice No. 1 outlines what the Department of Transport and Main Roads is doing to manage the impact of urban traffic growth. In light of the recent report by the Auditor-General, can the minister inform the committee about additional measures he proposes to implement to deal with this issue?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the honourable member for Whitsunday for her question. Since 2009 when the field work for the Auditor-General's report was concluded, Queensland Transport and Main Roads have been amalgamated. This removes any question regarding which agency has responsibility for leadership of the transport system at the state level and simplifies coordination of congestion responses. My department is taking an integrated approach to managing congestion, in collaboration with the Queensland Police Service, the Department of Infrastructure and Planning, the Department of Community Safety, TransLink and local government, Queensland Motorways Ltd and commercial operators. So we have an overarching responsibility to work with those organisations.

The issue of congestion management is complex and requires a variety of management techniques and solutions. We are building and upgrading roads on all sides of the city. Major projects include the \$315 million Houghton Highway duplication, the \$1.88 billion Gateway upgrade project, the \$4.8 billion Airport Link PPP, the \$2.5 billion upgrade of the Ipswich Motorway, the \$800 million Darra to Springfield road-rail project, the \$910 million upgrade of the Pacific Motorway and the \$183 million Bruce Highway upgrade. More than \$2 billion is being invested in South-East Queensland roads in 2009-10, which is a massive figure.

But we recognise, as I said earlier, that this alone will not ease congestion. That is why I am working closely with my colleague Minister Nolan to develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with congestion. We are also meeting our election commitment by delivering our fast incident response plan to deal more quickly and effectively with incidents on our road network.

Mr Stewart: They are being manufactured on the Sunshine Coast at Ekebol.

Mr WALLACE: These vehicles are being manufactured on the Sunshine Coast—that is local jobs. They are big vehicles to clear those big accidents.

I have met with my department to discuss the leadership role that the new department will take in planning and coordination of transport and roads infrastructure development. We will be ensuring that the department acts as the primary vehicle for development and implementation of transport planning across government and will be the key agency engaging the stakeholders with regard to this plan.

We will improve the sources of data that we use to underpin our planning activities by increasing our use of real-time data provided across our networks through the intelligent transport system technology that is steadily being rolled out. My department is also looking at starting to use new national

performance indicators on congestion to get better data collection on roads. New Austroads national performance indicators have been developed to better assess road network performance. Other states are rolling out those programs as well. I am keen to see these performance indicators looked at and addressed so that we can compare what we are doing here in Queensland with other cities like Melbourne and Sydney. These new performance indicators will use real-time data to assess travel speed, variation from posted speed, reliability, speed and flow, and intersection performance.

Mr CHOI: I also want to refer to the answer provided by the government to question on notice No. 1 which indicated the government's election commitment to put in place a fast incident response plan. Can the minister advise the committee of the progress of implementation of this commitment?

Mr WALLACE: Thank you. The member for Capalaba would appreciate these fast incident response units so that we can get accidents out of the way quicker and ease congestion. As we know, 25 per cent of congestion is caused by vehicle accidents on our roadways, so the quicker we can clear those accidents the quicker we can keep traffic moving.

We are acquiring two specifically designed heavy vehicle response units capable of lifting heavy trucks and semitrailers from our roadways. As my D-G said, they are being built on the Sunshine Coast and will be a testament to the craftsmanship of the people building those vehicles up there. We will take possession of the first of these vehicles later this month and the second in August. Testing and training will be carried out and the vehicles will be operating on our roads from September.

We promised seven new incident response depots. The first two locations have been secured and will be operating in August. We have identified savings and now we can announce that we will announce nine depots altogether, with two additional ones for the growing western corridor region. These depots will hold, ready for deployment, the tools, equipment and materials required to respond to most incidents. Field staff have been able to respond to incidents effectively and in a timely manner without delays while materials are collected and loaded. So instead of having a centralised depot somewhere in the city which they have to travel from to get to an accident which occurred, say, 15 kilometres away, we will have depots closer to those known spots so we can respond much quicker.

Mr Stewart: Our RoadTek staff worked throughout last night on that incident.

Mr WALLACE: You are absolutely right. RoadTek worked on that oil spill that we unfortunately had earlier this year as well. So we have a mobile crew that we can roll out to these particular incidents.

We gave a commitment to have a police presence in the Brisbane Metropolitan Traffic Management Centre. Operational procedures and provision of equipment have been agreed, and the new arrangements will begin in September. It will be easier for our traffic controllers in that management centre once we have a police presence. We work very, very closely with the police, especially where there has been a serious accident, to get that accident cleared so we can keep traffic moving.

We have committed to delivering three special incident cameras that take a 360-degree image of an accident. Previously, with the two-dimensional shots that we used, it was sometimes difficult to gauge what had happened at an accident scene. Using this new technology, we get a 360-degree panorama of the accident so the police and our crews can much more easily record evidence and see what occurred.

Mr Stewart: It is similar to the technology that was used on the tilt train accident, where they actually used laser projection to rebuild and recast the scene.

Mr WALLACE: That means we can ensure we remove the accidents and get traffic flowing much more quickly. Quicker data collection and investigation will allow traffic flow to be restored in less time after serious accidents, thus reducing congestion.

Mr WELLS: My question concerns the amalgamation. I refer the minister to page 2-172 of the Service Delivery Statement which refers to the establishment of the Department of Transport and Main Roads. From the point of view of a local member, the ability to get a single departmental perspective on the entire network, particularly as it relates to your own local area, is enormously beneficial. Can the minister inform the committee of his rationale for the establishment of the new department and how the process of merging the departments of Main Roads and Transport is progressing?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the honourable member for Murrumba for the question. As he appreciates, having that single point that he and other users of road and transport systems in this state can go to is a good step forward in our transport planning and the rollout of our record \$3.53 billion capital program.

Following the election, the Premier announced a substantial reform program to consolidate similar functions and improve services for Queenslanders. As part of these changes, Queensland Transport and Main Roads have merged to form a single department, known as the Department of Transport and Main Roads. Benefits of the new integrated agency include maintaining and enhancing the focus on the customer, grouping like activities and identifying synergies where possible, and reinforcing the integration of planning functions across the agency in accordance with government priorities. I am sure the director-general will agree that we are really putting customer service at the top of our tree when it comes to delivery.

Mr Stewart: Plus the delivery of a significant infrastructure program. That is our key focus.

Mr WALLACE: That is absolutely right. It also provides significant opportunities to ensure greater contestability in transport policy and investment, with a focus on delivering the optimal outcome for the transport system as a whole rather than any particular mode. We are delivering on the Premier's commitment to streamline services for customers and improve efficiencies. The new department will now be responsible for all modes of transport, providing opportunities for a truly integrated approach to planning, programming and delivery of transport infrastructure and services to the people of Queensland.

To assist with the integration of the new department, a project governance structure was established by the director-general. This included a project steering committee and project team. We have got charts here showing how we have done it. We have worked really hard to get a topnotch organisation up and running. The project has been undertaken in two phases. Part 1 identified the business model and functional structure by 30 June, and part 2 defined the detailed organisational structure, reporting relationships and accountabilities below the general manager level by 30 September. We have been very busy since the election drawing together two very big organisations. We all have one vision, and that is better transport delivery for Queensland.

I am pleased to say that phase 1 has been completed. The business model was released by my director-general on 8 May, and it organises the department into major functional areas of planning, programming and delivery of transport infrastructure and service delivery to Queenslanders. On 20 May the director-general released his high-level functional structure that includes the appointment of five deputy directors-general and 19 general managers. Despite media reports, I would like to put on the record that the new director positions are not being created by this department. The merger has given us the opportunity to review all departmental functions and rearrange business units so they better serve customers.

CHAIR: Page 2-172 of the Service Delivery Statement notes that one of the service delivery priorities of the Department of Transport and Main Roads is to manage the impact of urban traffic growth. Recent publicity has suggested that this may be made more difficult if a slip lane entry to the Riverside Expressway has to be closed when the Kurilpa pedestrian bridge, which is in my electorate, is opened. Can the minister advise the committee whether the slip lane will have to be closed?

Mr WALLACE: You will be pleased to hear my response, Madam Chair, because we are going to keep that slip lane open. I am pleased to inform the committee that we will not be closing the North Quay slip lane entry point to the Riverside Expressway. The slip lane will remain open following a further review of the overheight vehicle risk management by external consultants Arup and McCormick Rankin Cagney. This review identified that, should an overheight vehicle strike Kurilpa Bridge, there would be only localised damage to the bridge structure depending on the point of impact and this would not result in the bridge structure failing. Some of those reports—and, again, 'Chicken Little' statements—by certain members that the bridge would fall over if struck have proved incorrect.

Mr Stewart: Minister, do you mind if I make a comment?

Mr WALLACE: Sure.

Mr Stewart: Arup is a world-leading expert in the design of bridges and structures. If you look in Australia, the most famous Ove Arup structure is the Sydney Opera House. These people are exceptionally competent. They are the leaders in the world, and I want to give a guarantee to this committee that structural integrity is at the forefront. They have designed that bridge to optimal standards and it can withstand impacts of bridges. I just wanted to make that point.

Mr WALLACE: This reassessment that the director-general has mentioned has concluded that the overall risks associated with the scenario of an illegal oversized vehicle—so the vehicle would actually have to get onto the expressway illegally and hit the two council bridges—coming into contact with that bridge would cause minimal damage.

Due to the lower risk of an overheight vehicle striking the bridge at the North Quay on-ramp and the low-risk consequences, it is now possible to keep the slip lane open for traffic to access the Riverside Expressway. Traffic management devices and signage will be installed to advise motorists of the height restriction on the slip lane. This new report confirmed there is a greater risk of an illegal overheight vehicle striking the bridge from the Ann Street westbound ramp. To mitigate this risk, the department is building a positive stop barrier on the Ann Street on-ramp to restrict westbound overheight vehicles from accessing the Riverside Expressway via this ramp. They should not be on there in the first place.

Works began on this barrier on 28 June and are expected to be completed by the end of August 2009. It should be remembered that the Kurilpa Bridge has been built well above the legal vehicle size limits of more than 5.5 metres. This clearance is higher than the Victoria Bridge and the William Jolly Bridge, which most traffic goes under before the Kurilpa Bridge. It also has a greater clearance than the CLEM7 tunnel being built by the Brisbane City Council.

Another issue that arose during the risk assessment is the safety of the slip lane when traffic is merging onto the expressway from North Quay. The slip lane was opened as a temporary measure in 1999 to cope with disruption to traffic flow when Brisbane City Council was undertaking some sewage works. My department will work with Brisbane City Council in the near future to improve the North Quay slip lane safety.

Mr CHOI: Minister, it is my understanding that Brisbane City Council and the state government have very different traffic control systems. Page 1-74 of the Service Delivery Statement indicates there has been some migration of Brisbane City Council's traffic control system to the state. Can you report to the committee its status?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Capalaba for the question. We are working closely with Brisbane City Council on traffic control systems. Our Intelligent Transport System, better known as ITS, is playing an increasingly critical role in the operations of our roads. As you would know, member for Capalaba, it is not just about the size of the road or the length of the road; it is about how we use those roads and use them wisely. ITS offers opportunities to make travel safer, more reliable and more accessible.

The single ITS platform project is a joint Department of Transport and Main Roads and Brisbane City Council initiative that aims to optimise the operation of signalised intersections across the entire road network through the deployment of STREAMS. STREAMS is the Department of Transport and Main Roads' integrated ITS platform installed throughout Queensland to manage both motorway and surface street traffic.

Mr Stewart: Developed by a department owned company.

Mr WALLACE: Exactly right; developed locally. Indeed, it is being looked at and used—

Mr Stewart: In Victoria.

Mr WALLACE:—in Victoria. STREAMS is developed and maintained by Transmax Pty Ltd, a company wholly owned by my department, and currently operates at more than 1,600 signalised intersections. The system provides the department with services such as traffic signal management, incident management, motorway management including ramp signalling, variable speed limits, variable measured signs, special vehicle priority including emergency vehicles, and public transport and traveller information.

Importantly, a successful pilot was delivered on Moggill Road at Indooroopilly in June last year. The pilot study was conducted on 12 intersections with the traffic signals synchronised under STREAMS along Moggill Road between the Kenmore Village roundabout and Coonan Street. The trial achieved travel time reductions of up to 13 per cent during weekday periods and up to 17 per cent on weekends. That is just doing things smarter on that particular road system.

Further piloting of STREAMS to Sandgate Road and Mains Road is currently being implemented. A road operations alliance between council and the state is being developed that will improve network performance against current trends, optimise operations of the road network at the whole network level and ensure an ongoing commitment of resources from each level of government to deliver continuing benefits. This is smart technology delivering smart choices on our road system in South-East Queensland and, as the director-general said, interstate.

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

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, I refer to the rebranding of the motorway E-toll to go via, and I ask: how much was paid for the use of the Freddie Mercury song and the overall rebranding exercise?

Mr WALLACE: I talked about free-flow tolling and its success in my last answer to the member for Maroochydore. As I pointed out, 44,000 go via tags as well as several thousand go via video passes have been issued since July. That goes to show that this advertising campaign has worked. When you spend money as a government on advertising, you want it to work because there is so much out there in the marketplace at the moment that you have to cut through. I make no apologies for informing the people of Queensland and South-East Queensland of those particular improvements to traffic flow on the Gateway. As I said earlier, 155,000 go via tags have been issued by Queensland Motorways in the past six weeks alone. In conjunction with the broader network upgrades, free-flow tolling measures are intended to improve traffic flow by about 10 minutes on the Logan and Gateway motorways.

With that particular campaign we have had a massive success. I am sure everyone on the committee has heard the jingle *Don't stop me now*, and that has led to that massive uptake of options. Licensing and performance rights for using the Queen song *Don't stop me now* for a period of 12 months amounted to \$150,000 for television, radio and internet and on-hold music and broadcast via our mobile customer service centre, the Cruiser. So, \$150,000 to secure the rights to that particular song has resulted in over 155,000 go via tags issued in the past six weeks alone—155,000 tags issued in the past six weeks alone. Mr Stewart, do you want to say something about that highly successful program?

Mr Stewart: I think the other thing that is interesting to see is that QML are not the only people who are out there trying to market their product. I heard on the radio this morning again about the CLEM7 tunnel. A key thing here is tag penetration and really trying to differentiate a product. QML have

been a leader in this area. Look at the technology they are implementing for free-flow tolling. This technology application will have broader roles across our transport network from a safety perspective. This is leading technology. I must say it is some of the best technology I have seen in the world as far as tolling goes. There was advertising for the CLEM7 tunnel this morning. You will see their billboards everywhere.

Mr WALLACE: And they will be using our tags.

Mr Stewart: Our tags are fully interoperable across this country. So, whether you are using a tag in Melbourne, a QML tag, you can use that tag system anywhere.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, I refer to the sale of Queensland Motorways. When were you first made aware of the proposal to sell this asset and when were you requested to provide advice? Have you or your department given this advice to Treasury regarding your preferred structure or timing of this proposed sale?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the honourable member for the question. The Treasurer is in the best position to respond to detailed assets sales issues about the program. As you know, the Premier announced the sale program on 2 June 2009 to be completed in the next three to five years. Queensland Motorways Ltd has been identified as one of the sale packages. We made those tough decisions to keep our record Capital Works Program underway. As I said earlier, it is \$3.53 billion on roads in Queensland and over 30,000 jobs. Which project don't we build in South-East Queensland if we do not make these tough decisions? Which projects don't we build? Do we not continue the upgrades of the Sunshine Motorway or the Steve Irwin Way duplication?

Ms SIMPSON: When were you first made aware, Minister?

Mr WALLACE: The Caboolture-Bribie Island Road, Bruce Highway additional lanes from Pine Rivers to Caboolture—we will not be able to build those if we do not make these tough decisions.

In Australia, reform of government authorities has focused on commercialisation, corporatisation and privatisation. As the Premier has said, the sale process is anticipated to take three to five years. It will not be rushed and government will get the best outcomes possible for our state, the employees and customers. The government's objectives for the sale program are to maximise sale proceeds, minimise residual risk and facilitate private sector provision of infrastructure in the future. This government is convinced that taking the proposed course of action will only be good for Queensland, otherwise we would not be taking this very difficult path. Given that Queensland Motorways Ltd has been identified by government as one of the sale packages, my department will be working closely with Treasury to ensure that key policy issues, transport outcomes and the strategic interests of the state are given due consideration during the sale process.

Mr Stewart: Mr Tesch, our associate director-general, is leading the department's charge on asset sales to make sure that the right policy settings are obtained.

Mr WALLACE: That is absolutely right. The government expects to generate approximately \$3 billion through the sale of QML and avoid paying an additional \$1 billion in future capital expenditure. Again, which projects don't we build? Do we stop the Gateway duplication now when it is halfway across? Do we stop the Houghton Bridge duplication when it is halfway across? No, no, no. We need to keep building these wonderful projects.

I note that the government is committed to ongoing state ownership of the roads and bridges currently owned and operated by QML. In Queensland the government historically has been primarily responsible for planning, development and ownership of the core infrastructure of the state controlled main roads network. However, the private sector has already been encouraged to provide and manage certain operating assets like the Airport Link. Privately owned roads are already successfully operating in New South Wales and in Victoria. To protect road users from unreasonable toll increases in the future, it is the government's intention to legislate a toll level at the time of the sale and then allow that toll to increase only with inflation into the future.

Ms SIMPSON: I note the minister did not answer my question, which was when he knew of the asset sale. He did not answer that. It seems to be that the minister has no involvement whatsoever in key and critical decisions of government.

Mr WALLACE: Madam Chair, I am not going to respond to those sorts of criticisms.

Ms SIMPSON: Well, when did you know, Minister, that these assets were going to be sold?

Mr WALLACE: I will take that as another question, then. I will take that as the second question, Madam Chair?

CHAIR: Let's not interrupt. We will take the question from the member for Maroochydhore.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, when did you know?

Mr WALLACE: As I outlined earlier, we have taken these tough decisions in Queensland and we did that at a cabinet level. I know the member for Maroochydhore has never served in a cabinet, so she would not be aware of the policies around cabinet decisions. I am certainly not going to breach cabinet confidence here, as the member for Maroochydhore seems to want me to do. I will not do that.

Ms SIMPSON: Was that before the election, Minister, that the government took that decision?

CHAIR: I think you have asked a question, member for Maroochydhore. Let the minister answer the initial question.

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, Madam Chair. As I have spelt out, I am not going to reveal cabinet confidences in this room because that is against the law. I am very careful not to do that. As I said, we made these tough decisions so that we can continue building a record number of roads across Queensland.

On the north coast, in the member for Maroochydhore's area, for instance, this year \$358 million is being spent on our roads program, generating 2,980 jobs. Does the member for Maroochydhore suggest that we can do that? As I said, there are other projects like the Houghton Highway duplication, the Steve Irwin Way duplication and the Bruce Highway upgrade at Caboolture. There are projects that we opened recently which the member for Maroochydhore attended. Locally we have talked about the Gateway Motorway. We have talked about big jobs like the Acacia Ridge rail overpass that is saving about 15 to 20 minutes in travel time for the people using Beaudesert Road.

Mr Stewart: There is the level crossing at Beerwah.

Mr WALLACE: These projects are occurring right across Queensland, like the Cooroy to Curra section, which is identified as the most dangerous section of road in Queensland, for which we are putting in over \$120 million.

Mr Stewart: We are bringing forward that money.

Mr WALLACE: We are bringing forward that money. We had to make this tough decision so that we could continue to do that.

What about projects that we have had to fund like the \$70 million Calliope Range realignment on the Dawson Highway or the \$65 million replacement of the Don River bridges on the Leichhardt Highway? Do we not do them if we do not make the tough decisions?

The member for Whitsunday would be keenly aware of the \$20 million we have put into the Joint Levee Road program that will alleviate many of the traffic concerns for residents in North Mackay. Do we stop that halfway? I agree with the member for Whitsunday. No, we do not. Do we stop the \$10.3 million upgrade of the Whitsunday Way? No, I think that is wrong.

We need to continue funding these programs and keep Queenslanders working. That is why we made the tough decisions. Do we stop the \$148 million Forgan Bridge halfway? We do not. What a stupid idea to stop it halfway. That is exactly what would happen if the opposition had its way and stopped funding road programs. There is \$15 million for the new Endeavour Bridge—

Ms SIMPSON: What else are you going to sell?

Mr WALLACE: I note that the member for Maroochydhore does not believe we should continue these important roadworks across the state. We have to do them. That is why we made the tough decisions in terms of the sale of QML. There is \$65 million for the upgrade of the Gregory and Kennedy Development roads. I could keep going.

Ms SIMPSON: I was just pondering what else you are about to flog off. I note the department's role to ensure the long-term development of Queensland's road network as part of an integrated transported system is outlined in the Service Delivery Statement at page 2-179. The recent Auditor-General's report into urban congestion criticised your department for planning activity that 'lacks integration and alignment and compromises its overall effectiveness in managing the Queensland road network' and found your department had failed to properly consider urban traffic growth in your reporting. Minister, will you apologise to the people of South-East Queensland for such blatant failures instead of just welcoming the report?

Mr WALLACE: Can I thank the honourable member for Maroochydhore for the question. We are tackling urban congestion in South-East Queensland. I have been talking about that this morning. I talked about the South-East Queensland 2031 study which is planning for the future of this state. Last night my colleague the infrastructure minister released the latest SEQIPP. It plans for the future delivery of infrastructure in South-East Queensland.

We are getting on with the job of delivering projects right across South-East Queensland that will help ease urban congestion. The Queensland government's congestion management program aims to provide a transport system that is efficient, reliable and productive, thereby improving the economy and protecting jobs. The Australian bureau of infrastructure and transport says that we have to tackle that.

The government's approach to managing urban congestion is focused on five key themes. They are: land use and a planning focus which focuses on building well-planned cities to reduce the need for travel; pricing and travel demand management which is changing behaviour through incentives to encourage less private vehicle travel—that is, encouraging walking to work and other options—travel

options to provide choices about the movement of both passengers and goods; and efficiency which focuses on maximising the efficiency of the existing infrastructure. I talked about that with the member for Capalaba earlier when I mentioned STREAMS. We also have to increase the capacity of road and public transport networks.

I reject the member for Maroochydore's assertion that we are not focused on urban congestion. We are and we are looking at it very closely. The Department of Transport and Main Roads will lead the government's charge in relation to strategic transport planning through plans such as Connecting SEQ 2031: An integrated regional transport plan for South East Queensland, the TransLink Network Plan and the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program.

I talked earlier in response to a question from one of the government members about the Auditor-General's findings. Since February 2009 when the fieldwork for the Auditor-General's report was concluded Queensland Transport and Main Roads have been amalgamated. We have taken that step. The Auditor-General actually welcomed that step and said it was a good move forward.

This removes any question regarding which agency has responsibility for the transport system at the state level and simplifies coordination of congestion responses. We are working very closely with our colleagues, for instance, in the Police Service to ensure that we tackle urban congestion and that we make it a higher priority for my department. I reject the assertion from the member for Maroochydore that we are not tackling it as strongly as we should. Mr Stewart, do you want to add anything to that?

Mr Stewart: I think the other thing is that there is—

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Stewart, the time has expired. Does the member for Maroochydore consent to an extension of time?

Ms SIMPSON: Not this time, but thanks anyway. Twelve months after the WBTNI study finished public consultation the website states that no decision has been made. When will you make a decision about the options presented by this study?

Mr WALLACE: For the information of the member, you may want to save that question for the transport minister next week. She has carriage of that particular issue.

Ms SIMPSON: I refer to your answer to question on notice No. 12. It appears the departmental planning process is in a shambles and is seemingly without coordination. You have had a Department of Infrastructure and Planning since 2006. We have had ministers trying to explain the abysmal results of the Auditor-General's report. Who is in control of forward planning, particularly of corridor acquisition, which includes WBTNI?

Mr WALLACE: As I said earlier, my department has taken a key role since its merger in providing transport solutions right across the state. We have come together as one department. We have a key role in that regard. We preserve corridors right across the state for future planning be they on the Sunshine Coast, in Brisbane, on the Gold Coast, in Townsville or in the member for Whitsunday's electorate. We do take that planning very seriously.

Sometimes I am criticised for taking that action and doing that forward planning. There was an issue in Warwick a couple of months ago. They were mentioning that they wanted to plan for the future growth of their township but were keen to do it in such a way that any future road corridor would not impinge on that growth and so that they would not have to move houses. We are working very closely with the local governments like the one in Warwick to ensure that we get that planning right.

I again reject the assertion from the member for Maroochydore that we are slipshod in the way we approach corridor planning or that in some way we do not deliver corridor plans. We are doing corridor planning right across the state. It is a very important exercise so that we can plan for the growth of our fast-growing state.

One of the things we find as we are rolling out our record \$3.53 billion program across the state is where that corridor planning had not been done by previous administrations our compensation costs for resuming land of established dwellings or businesses is quite large. That takes a large sum of our funding to roll out these projects.

That is why we are doing this planning right across the state. I reject the assertion that we are somehow slipshod. In South-East Queensland we are using SEQIPP to help plan for that. Planners in my department are playing a key role in working with local governments to identify corridors for future growth, be they for the next 10 years or the next 30 years. As such, I am pretty disappointed in the member for Maroochydore's question.

We undertake comprehensive planning which will allow us to optimise our investments in projects like the Centenary Highway extension at Ipswich, the Gateway Motorway upgrade project and public transport investment in priority corridors such as in Cairns, on the Gold Coast and in Brisbane. These are important growth centres. We played a key role in the development of the Far North Queensland plan. Mr Stewart might like to add to that.

Mr Stewart: The point that we made in our response—

CHAIR: The time has expired. Would the member consent to an extension of time?

Ms SIMPSON: No, Madam Chair, but my next question relates to the same issue so there may be an opportunity then. Minister, your answer only confirms that there is still a lack of clarity about who is responsible for going forward with plans that actually turn into land acquisitions of corridors. WBTNI, you would accept, would result in acquisition of corridors for the relief of future traffic congestion. What responsibility do you have in ensuring that that is done in a timely way or are you going to flick pass this to the transport minister?

Mr WALLACE: I gave a very comprehensive response on land acquisition, corridor management and corridor identification that my department does across the state. Quite clearly, the member for Maroochydore did not appreciate the response because it showed that we are working. We are working to preserve those corridors. In certain circumstances we purchase residences where they come up for sale.

Mr Stewart: I think the key thing that we have actually said in our response to the Auditor-General is that the government had a very clear policy direction of moving to regional planning. The regional planning process undertaken by the Department of Infrastructure and Planning has a very critical transport component to it. The transport plan feeds into the regional plan. We have an extensive corridor acquisition process. We understand where our transport needs are. We use land use modelling. We top that up with transport modelling. We understand those issues.

You will see with SEQIPP what we have to do when we have to acquire corridors in advance. We also have examples at the moment where we act on hardship acquisitions very quickly.

CHAIR: The next round of questions will be from government members. I call the honourable member for Murrumba.

Mr WELLS: The answer to government question on notice No. 9 gives an indication of how important the Main Roads portfolio is to maintaining employment opportunities in Queensland. In the current globally difficult financial times can the minister outline how strongly committed he is to maintaining delivery of the capital program and thereby protecting Queensland jobs?

Mr WALLACE: Can I thank the honourable member for Murrumba for the question—a good question in the current economic climate. As we have discussed earlier, the Bligh government is strongly committed to protecting jobs through its \$18 billion infrastructure plan. We went to the election in March on a platform of creating and protecting jobs. That is what our \$3.4 billion road building program delivers. Funding of road maintenance, rehabilitation and construction activity generates widespread short- and long-term payoffs in terms of employment generation and productivity improvements.

In the current economic climate, investment in road infrastructure is guaranteed to flow through to the general economy which results in wider benefits. Road investment acts as a key generator of employment, particularly in remote and rural Queensland where dependency on state funded road maintenance and construction work is higher. I have been in regional Queensland and I have seen the RoadTek crews at work. They are good, honest local people rolling out better roads for Queensland. That is putting bread and butter on the table in a very tough economic climate.

While large infrastructure projects generate high employment numbers, maintenance and rehabilitation activities can be implemented rapidly relative to the longer lead times required for the planning and design of new construction. Getting on and fixing up a section of road can be done very quickly and this keeps people working. From an employment perspective this means that jobs can be created very quickly. In turn, economic stimulus flows through to the local economies. The 2008-09 to 2012-13 Roads Implementation Program is estimated to generate sustainable employment for over 30,000 people on average in every year in roads and supporting industries over the life of the program. That is 30,000 Queenslanders making a living out of our better roads.

Projects such as the Ipswich Motorway upgrade are generating more than 8,600 direct and indirect jobs, making it one of the largest construction sites in the country. Jobs vary from carpenters, concreters, crane drivers, form setters, labourers, pipe layers, plumbers, steel fixers, traffic controllers to truck drivers. The construction site is also a training ground for the next generation of Aussie nation builders. The Ipswich Motorway site will have over 80 trainees working on it over the next year. Trainees for certificate III civil construction learn about plant operation, road construction and maintenance, bridge construction and pipe laying. The construction contractors delivering the upgrade of the Ipswich Motorway are involved in skills training programs supported by the federal and state governments.

It is essential that we continue to train people for the jobs of tomorrow because we will come out of this financial crisis and we will need skilled workers ready. The last thing we want when we have an upswing is to not have those skills in the economy. Our road projects are delivering on our election commitment to protect Queensland jobs. It is the most important focus for our government which is why we are continuing to invest in our massive building program to ensure Queenslanders remain employed.

Ms JARRATT: Minister, you have already referred to several of the important road projects occurring across the Mackay-Whitsunday region. I refer you now specifically to the replacement of the Hospital Bridge and approaches in Mackay and the recently opened Mackay-Bucasia Road project and ask you to advise the committee of the benefits of these projects for the residents of the region.

Mr WALLACE: I thank the honourable member for Whitsunday for a question about a couple of projects that are very dear to her heart. She is been lobbying very strongly for these particular projects for that very fast-growing community in North Mackay and she is starting to see some real results there, which is a great testament to the way she works for her community.

It was with great pleasure that I joined the member for Whitsunday, the member for Mackay and the mayor of Mackay at the community celebrations for the completion of the replacement of the Hospital Bridge in April this year. That project involved the construction of a 550-metre bridge and approaches over the Pioneer River for a new alignment upstream from the existing timber bridge. The new bridge includes three kilometres of two-metre on-road bikeway facilities from Lagoon Street across the new bridge to Fursden Creek Bridge. The project has also made provision to widen the bridge by a further 3.5 metres in the future for a pedestrian walkaway.

This project also boosted the local economy, with over 134 direct and indirect jobs sustained over the life of the project—I suppose for many people from your electorate, member for Whitsunday. This project was part of a huge investment in road infrastructure in the Mackay-Whitsunday area which includes the \$148 million Forgan Bridge replacement and duplication project, the \$20 million Joint Levee Road construction and the \$17.5 million duplication of the Mackay-Bucasia Road between Phillip Street and Golfinks Road. You will be very pleased that we have finalised that section and opened that Mackay-Bucasia Road, which is a busy road. I think there are about 40,000 vehicles per day on that road. That just shows that it is a very busy piece of infrastructure.

I was again pleased to visit the Whitsunday electorate last week to officially open that section of the road. It was a bit cool and windy that day, though. I hope that weather has moved on. Send it down here. I saw firsthand the benefits that this duplication has delivered in providing a safer and more efficient road network for the people of Mackay, in particular the residents of the northern beaches suburbs. This state government made an election commitment to provide these communities with an efficient four-lane route into town and this project has delivered on that promise. The duplication caters for increasing travel volumes in the area and will continue to do so well into the future, which will result in reduced congestion and improved travelling conditions for motorists. The Mackay-Bucasia Road is a vital link to the city centre of Mackay for the northern beaches communities and was opened last week. The mayor, Col Meng, told me that it will make a real difference in travel times.

The Mackay-Whitsunday region will benefit from a \$149 million road program this financial year. This funding of work will not only continue our commitments to delivering the infrastructure that is needed to connect Queenslanders but also sustain jobs for 1,576 workers in the Mackay region during 2009-10. This is a tremendous financial commitment and once again demonstrates the Bligh government's continued determination to meet the road infrastructure needs of the people of the Mackay-Whitsunday region.

Ms JARRATT: If I could just ask you to keep your attention on the wonderful Mackay-Whitsunday region—

Mr WALLACE: My pleasure.

Ms JARRATT: I refer you to the Service Delivery Statement, which refers to projects completed under the Safer Roads Sooner program. Could the minister advise the committee about Safer Roads Sooner projects that are being delivered in the Whitsunday electorate?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the honourable member for Whitsunday again. It is my pleasure to keep examining her electorate. It is a wonderful part of Queensland. It is always a joy to visit and I am really made to feel at home whenever I go there. As everyone would appreciate, road safety is an essential part of all new work undertaken by my department. The Safer Roads Sooner program aims to address the road toll and reduce the number of people who sustain serious injuries in road crashes. It is a really important program. The program provides low-cost, high-benefit projects to address both identified and potential high-severity crash sites on the 33,373 kilometres of our state controlled road network. The proactive identification and treatment of potential crash sites is based on risk assessments. My department investigates all fatal road crashes and some serious injury crashes.

Mr Stewart: I actually get a message with every incident on the roads.

Mr WALLACE: As I do. Whenever we have a major incident, my phone buzzes and informs me of that and we take the appropriate action from there. Sometimes it is a very busy phone, unfortunately.

Mr Stewart: Yes.

Mr WALLACE: My department investigates all fatal road crashes and some serious injury crashes in order to identify any road factors that may contribute to the cause and severity of the crash and to promptly respond with engineering measures, where appropriate.

Member for Whitsunday, would you be interested in this figure? Just off the top of my head, over 90 per cent of accidents in Queensland are caused, unfortunately, by human error. So we can do only so much at a road level. In over 90 per cent of cases it comes down to the driver and the actions of the driver.

Mr Stewart: Human factors.

Mr WALLACE: Human factors. In November 2008, the Bligh government approved an additional \$19 million per annum for the Safer Roads Sooner program, which includes \$4 million dedicated to motorcycle safety. Over the five years, total funding is now at \$300 million, including \$21 million per annum from camera detected offence revenue. The total annual funding for the Safer Roads Sooner program between 2009-10 and 2010-11 will rise to \$47 million.

In your wonderful electorate there is an allocation of \$200,000 to improve delineation and line marking on the Mackay-Habana Road, which is in the Mackay council area; a \$50,000 project to improve signage and line marking at the intersection of the Devereaux Creek road and the Marian Hampden road in the Mackay region; a \$40,000 project to improve delineation and line marking on the Gregory Cannon Valley road—a beautiful road in the area of the Whitsunday Regional Council; a \$1.2 million project to improve lighting, delineation and signage for the Proserpine-Shute Harbour Road in the Whitsunday area; and an \$800,000 project to approve intersection lighting, delineation and visibility on the Proserpine-Shute Harbour Road in the Whitsunday area. I know you would welcome that funding, member for Whitsunday.

You will be particularly interested in this last project, as it was a commitment that you made during the recent election campaign to have this intersection approved. The ongoing safety of motorists travelling through Cannonvale and Jubilee Pocket has been targeted through this project. My department is currently working on design options for the planned upgrade.

Mr WELLS: Page 2-177 of the Service Delivery Statements notes the recent completion of several major projects on the Sunshine Coast. The people of the Sunshine Coast enjoy the great benefit of being just down the road from the electorate of Murrumba. I would like to refer to the Sunshine Motorway upgrade and the southern section of the Caloundra-Mooloolaba road. Can the minister inform the committee of the benefits to the Sunshine Coast community of these and other projects delivered by the Labor government, particularly in respect of the ability of these people to get more quickly to the electorate of Murrumba?

CHAIR: I knew there was a reason for the question!

Mr WALLACE: I thank the honourable member for the question. We have done a lot, member for Murrumba, to assist the residents of the Sunshine Coast coming to visit your electorate of Murrumba, and I am sure they come to droves to examine your wonderful electorate.

Mr CRIPPS: When are you putting in a toll road?

Mr WALLACE: We had a toll road on the Sunshine Coast and you got rid of it and you chucked the debt on to QML. Since 2004-05 this government has invested \$1.223 billion in roadworks on the Sunshine Coast and surrounding areas—\$1.223 billion since 2004-05. Some of the key projects completed have included \$217.5 million to widen sections of the Sunshine Motorway from Sippy Downs to Pacific Paradise to four lanes, including a new bridge over the Maroochy River; an \$80 million upgrade of Caloundra Road to four lanes between the Bruce Highway and Pierce Avenue; \$75 million for the construction of a new two-lane road from Caloundra Road to Creekside Boulevard, forming the southern section of the multimodal transport corridor; and a \$112 million upgrade of Maroochy Road from two to four lanes from the Bruce Highway to Kunda Park. These vital infrastructure projects have significantly improved safety on our roads, reduced congestion and travel times and provided better facilities for all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists. They have provided a direct and intermediate boost to the local economy by creating jobs and supporting local businesses and they will continue to provide ongoing economic benefits to the region.

I am pleased to announce today that another Sunshine Coast project will be completed early next week. So there is better news for your electorate and the Sunshine Coast, member for Murrumba. The \$6.5 million upgrade of the Mooloolaba Road-Dixon Road intersection, which includes a new roundabout, will improve safety and efficiency for motorists in Buderim. About 14,300 vehicles use this intersection daily and the number is expected to grow by three per cent during the next five years. The new dual-lane roundabout will improve safety and traffic movements and give greater flexibility to cater for changes in future traffic demands. The local community has benefited from the new motorway interchange at the southern end of Dixon Road, and the new roundabout to the north will provide an even more efficient trip between Buderim and Sippy Downs. The project also generated an average of 49 direct and indirect jobs across the life of the project. So again, that was another job-creating scheme, providing better roads for Queenslanders.

The state government is committed to investing in infrastructure that will create jobs, support businesses and meet the needs of Queenslanders now and well into the future. Firm funding of \$820.2 million has been allocated to the north coast region for the 2008-09 and 2009-10 financial years

under the current Roads Implementation Program. Our roads program will provide a total of 7,010 direct and indirect jobs on the Sunshine Coast over the next couple of years. This compares, unfortunately, with the \$163 million in the coalition government's RIP before they lost power.

CHAIR: Page 1-22 of the Capital Statement refers to \$16 million being allocated in 2009-10 to complete the widening of a section of Maryborough-Hervey Bay Road—an area I love to visit. It may be of interest to the member for Maryborough, who is a member of this committee. Can the minister outline for the committee the details of this project and other recent projects delivered on this road?

Mr WALLACE: Thank you. As we can see this morning, there is a wide spread of programs, ranging from the beautiful Whitsundays to the wonderful Sunshine Coast and Murrumba and now up to Maryborough-Hervey Bay. What a great state we live in, with some of the most picturesque and beautiful country in the world, and we are rolling out better and safer roads.

Mr CHOI: Capalaba.

Mr WALLACE: And of course Capalaba, centre of the universe.

Mr CHOI: Thank you.

Mr WALLACE: Apart from Brisbane Central.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr WALLACE: But as a regional minister I understand the important role that the road network plays in keeping Queenslanders connected. Maryborough-Hervey Bay Road is an important 44.5-kilometre road linking the Bruce Highway and Hervey Bay via Maryborough. It is one of the busiest roads, as the member for Maryborough would attest, in the Fraser Coast region. Not only does this road play a crucial role connecting the cities of Maryborough and Hervey Bay; it is a popular tourist route that is used by visitors to the World Heritage listed Fraser Island. Last month, the \$11.5 million project between north of the Dundowran Road intersection of the Pialba-Burrum Heads road was completed. Motorists are now enjoying a smoother drive and improved traffic. Have you driven it yet, member for Maryborough?

Mr FOLEY: Yes.

Mr WALLACE: You have? Excellent. A good piece of road? Thank you very much. The project included widening and strengthening a 6.9-kilometre section of road with a new bitumen surface of at least 10 metres wide, allowing extra room for turning lanes at intersections and into private access. This also included upgrading five intersections and improving bus stop areas, private property access and signage as well as installing new overhead lighting. We are committed to ensuring that this busy coastal road meets the growing traffic demands in this part of the state.

An amount of \$16 million has been allocated to a second project which will be starting in the next few months, member for Maryborough. When completed, this upgrade will result in improved safety and travel efficiency for all road users and a road surface that can cater for a growing coastal area. A three-kilometre stretch of road on the Torbanlea-Pialba Road and the Dundowran Road will be upgraded to four lanes. This will accommodate the anticipated four per cent yearly traffic growth and improve travel times for motorists. Motorists will notice a major change on the road, with the construction of a new roundabout to replace the existing Torbanlea-Pialba Road and Booral Road intersections. The old Walligan road access will be realigned to a new T-intersection on Torbanlea-Pialba Road. The project also includes improving bus stop areas, signage and overhead lighting. In addition to road upgrades, the road is monitored by road crews and is inspected regularly, with maintenance funds allocated to ensure that it is kept in a safe condition.

Mr WELLS: I refer to the Houghton Highway bridge duplication. It is not always realised that it is actually in my electorate, although most of the people who will benefit from it live in the electorate of Redcliffe. I was driving across the bridge the other day, musing, as one does, on question No. 2 of the government questions on notice, and I thought to myself, 'We must be getting close to halfway.' I wonder if the minister was able to tell me by any chance when we will get to the halfway mark?

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, member for Murrumba. It is a great structure going up, as you would see on your drive across the old bridge. I am pleased to advise the committee that I inspected progress on the \$315 million Houghton Highway duplication project earlier this week. Beginning construction in March 2008, the project is supporting an average of 702 jobs—and many would come from your electorate, member for Murrumba.

Mr WELLS: My word.

Mr WALLACE: This is great news for Queenslanders. It is another example of our government delivering on its election commitments to support jobs for Queenslanders and invest in projects for the future. The good news, member for Murrumba, is that the bridge is now at the halfway point, with 39 of the 78 spans needed to complete the bridge now in place. So your prediction was correct, member for Murrumba—halfway.

To mark this important milestone, I was pleased to announce that the new bridge will be named the Ted Smout Memorial Bridge. This name commemorates the spirit of the Anzacs by acknowledging Queensland's last surviving World War I digger. Ted died in 2004 at the age of 106. He is a legend not only in the Brighton-Sandgate area but also in the whole of Australia. An interesting point about Ted is that he enlisted below age. He lied about his age to enlist with the AIF and served in the Australian medical corps on the western front. After the Red Baron was shot down by an Australian machine-gun crew—although the Canadians claim it, it was Australians—Ted was one of the first persons at the site of the crash. He saw the Red Baron very soon after he was shot down.

As part of Queensland's 150th birthday celebrations, we have sought names for more than 50 bridges across the state from suggestions from our community. Our Q150 bridge-naming celebrations are all about Queenslanders sharing their pride in the things that make our state unique, and Ted was certainly unique. He was our last surviving digger from that time, which really changed our country.

This new bridge stretches almost 1.4 kilometres over the water towards Clontarf with a new Pine River fishing platform in the middle of Bramble Bay.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The committee will adjourn for a short break. At 11 am we will resume our examination of the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Main Roads. Did you want to make a quick comment?

Mr WALLACE: If I can follow up on a question from the member for Maroochydore, the debt from the Logan Motorway was \$444 million as at 9 June 2008, and as at 30 June 2009 the debt was \$498 million. During the year ended 30 June 2009, \$11 million was paid on this debt from tolling operations. The debt was increased during this period to fund the \$41 million in civil works for free-flow tolling, to make the roads safer and allow traffic to move quickly, \$15 million in roadside costs and \$11 million in capital maintenance. It does take a lot of work to keep our roadways in good condition. That assists in that answer to the member for Maroochydore.

Proceedings suspended from 10.31 am to 11.00 am

Mr WALLACE: Madam Chair, before we start, my director-general would just like to correct the record on something that he said earlier.

CHAIR: Let me open and then I will go straight to the record correction. The Estimates Committee D hearing is resumed. The committee will resume its examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Main Roads. The committee's examination of estimates for the portfolio will continue until 12 pm. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I ask for the clarification now, please, Mr Stewart.

Mr Stewart: I want to clarify the point in relation to the Sunshine Motorway. When the tolls were removed from the Sunshine Motorway the former Department of Main Roads actually took out a 15-year debt facility in its own right from QTC for the repayment of the associated QML debt. I just wanted to clarify that.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. The first period of questioning is allocated to non-government members.

Ms SIMPSON: I note in the Service Delivery Statement page 2-177 that the budget papers boast about the funds received from the Nation Building Program and the Building Australia Fund. The only new federal funding from the federal government for roads was a massive \$884 million blow-out to \$1.9 billion on the Ipswich Motorway, and in 2006 you claimed that any spending more than \$1.1 billion was taking funding away from North Queensland. I also refer you to a promise that falls short of the previous federal coalition's commitment to the Cooroy to Curra section of the Bruce Highway by a massive \$280 million. Is it not true that Queensland was duded by the federal budget?

Mr WALLACE: Isn't it good to see the federal government playing a role in delivering better roads for Queenslanders?

Mr Stewart: And passenger transport.

Mr WALLACE: And passenger transport. For 40 years Queenslanders have had to put up with both sides of politics ripping us off when it came to roads. I led a campaign in the last term for mayors from Sarina up to Cairns to fight for more funds for the Bruce Highway. I tell you what, there was only one party that was successful and that was the Rudd government, which delivered over \$1 billion for that section of road. We were ripped off well and truly in North Queensland when it came to the previous Howard government and our federal roads. I know that the member for Whitsunday would agree with that. She drives those roads regularly; she drives the Bruce Highway. It was an utter disgrace. At long last the Rudd government has committed significant funds to north Queensland and the Bruce Highway.

The member for Maroochydore mentioned the Cooroy to Curra section. Again, in 11 years there was not a zack from the previous Howard government. There was a pittance for Queenslanders even though we kept paying more and more fuel tax. There was not a pittance from the previous federal government. At long last we have a federal government in Canberra committing to roads in Queensland.

What do we hear from the member for Maroochydore—the apologist for her mates in Canberra? That it is not good enough. When you compare the figures, member for Maroochydore, a commitment on the Bruce Highway of about \$2.6 billion from the Rudd government compared with \$800 million from her mates in Canberra—the numbers speak for themselves. In North Queensland this will mean major works on the Bruce Highway, the Cooroy to Curra section and, importantly, the Ipswich corridor—major sections on that western corridor. We will be spending about \$3 billion on that section of road between here and Ipswich in conjunction with the federal government—a very busy section of highway. Work is constantly underway up there. Construction on the Ipswich-Logan Motorway interchange, a very busy interchange, commenced in February 2007 and is due for completion in the second half of this year.

Construction on the Wacol to Darra project has commenced and is due to finish by the end of 2010. Stage 2 commenced in early July this year. It is a big project and completion is expected by September 2010. Construction of the Dinmore to Goodna project, which the member referred to, is now underway with the project due for completion in late 2012. It is a really big piece in that jigsaw.

Mr Stewart: There was a very successful traffic switch last week.

Mr WALLACE: A very big switch and it was very successful.

Ms SIMPSON: I refer to your answer to my question on notice No. 18 where you acknowledge that the federal government has provided half a billion dollars for the Ipswich Motorway and the Cooroy to Curra project that was not spent in 2008-09. Minister, as the Service Delivery Statement page 2-183 notes that Commonwealth funds will now be paid directly to the Queensland Treasury instead of the department administered accounts, do these payments not amount to a half a billion dollar injection to disguise the even more parlous state of the Queensland budget?

Mr WALLACE: Absolutely incorrect! Before we started all of these Commonwealth funded projects—

Ms SIMPSON: That is the answer to your question on notice, that those funds went to Treasury for last year.

Mr WALLACE: Before we started these projects, we as a state incurred significant expenditure beforehand. So when we get funds from the Commonwealth, it is about repaying some of that significant pre-expenditure. We do not just go to Canberra and say, 'Look, we have nothing. We don't have an idea. We have to incur a significant expenditure beforehand. Mr Stewart, do you want to talk about some of the expenditure that we would incur before we even get a dollar from Canberra for these particular projects?

Mr Stewart: We are expected to undertake considerable prefeasibility work. We actually get out there very quickly and very early to do our planning. We do a lot of preliminary design, preconstruction works. We need to understand where the major utilities are. We need to undertake geotechnical investigations so we know how to design our bridges and our pavements. There is considerable design work. There is considerable preconstruction activities. It is an important process.

Mr WALLACE: Hardship acquisitions—where people are worried about their future, we need to buy those properties. We incur significant expenditure. When we do get flows of money from the Commonwealth for projects like Cooroy to Curra, the Ipswich Motorway or other federally funded projects across the state, we have already gone in there and done significant work so that once the money comes from Canberra we can roll out those projects a lot more quickly. That is an important fact.

For instance, that Cooroy to Curra section is a really dangerous section of the Bruce Highway and one for which I have been proud to secure federal funding since I have been minister. The upgrade of that section of the Bruce Highway is one of Queensland's highest priority road infrastructure projects. It is a great example of what happens when governments work together. There was a real need to have that project done.

I reject again that assertion from the member for Maroochydore that she continues to carry on with—the 'Chicken Little' of Queensland politics—that there was some cost blow-out on the Dinmore to Goodna section of the Ipswich Motorway. Absolutely incorrect! This department gave the Commonwealth a costing for that and the Commonwealth, to its credit, has committed funds. It has done something that the previous Howard government did not do in 11 years, and that is fund major road infrastructure right across Queensland. Mr Stewart, have you got anything to add?

Mr Stewart: The other thing is that we have been a very successful government in lobbying for Nation Building funds, particularly Infrastructure Australia. Yes, we would always like more money, but we were very successful. This is the first time we have seen money for a project like a passenger transport project—the Gold Coast rapid transit project. Importantly, in relation to Cooroy to Curra, when the Australian government asked us to step up, we did.

Ms SIMPSON: I refer to the output summary on page 2-182. The state contribution across these four sectors comes to a total of over \$2 billion. How much of this is Commonwealth revenue given that it is no longer separately itemised?

Mr WALLACE: This year, as I have told the committee repeatedly, we will spend about \$3.53 billion on our roads. Of that, the state contribution is around \$2 billion and I believe—Mr Ford, you might be able to assist. Is the federal contribution around \$1.5 billion?

Mr Ford: Correct.

Mr WALLACE: That is correct, \$1.5 billion. As I said earlier, what a change to actually have Canberra working with us on delivering better roads for Queenslanders. I know the member for Maroochydore—

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, can I just clarify—

Mr WALLACE: Hang on.

Ms SIMPSON:—that \$2 billion actually includes the Commonwealth funds because of the way it goes to Treasury before it is handed to your department. How much of that \$2 billion is actually federally funded?

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, you are interrupting. The minister is trying to answer the question. Minister, could you answer the original question?

Mr WALLACE: Thank you. As I was saying, we will spend about \$3.53 billion this year on roads. We expect to receive about \$1.5 billion of that from the federal government. So the member for Maroochydore can do her own sums. That \$3.53 billion, thanks to Canberra, is being spent wisely across the state. I make no apologies for going to Canberra to get more funding for our roads. I think every member of parliament should be doing that—taking the fight to Canberra to get more roads. The member for Maroochydore might not like it, but I do. I reckon the member for Hinchinbrook appreciates that new Mount Low Parkway overpass in his electorate that was paid for by the federal government. I think he does. I make no apologies for taking up the fight to Canberra to get more funding for our roads.

This funding from the federal government combined with our state funding is rolling out a massive program across the state that is employing 30,000 Queenslanders. The member for Maroochydore can pooh-pooh our relationship with Canberra as much as she wants, but this government can hold its head high and say that it takes up the fight to Canberra and gets funds for projects right across the state. The Pacific Motorway—\$490 million on that south coast area, the area from Nerang to Tugun. It was a joint effort between the state and the federal government. In relation to the western corridor that I have talked about, the federal government is actually playing a role in service delivery there. There is the Caboolture-Bribie Island Road upgrade—and the member for Murrumba would be aware of that—working on that really busy section of road. There is also the Bruce Highway upgrade which is nearly completed—Caboolture to Uhlmann Road, a really important project.

Mr WELLS: Hear, hear!

Mr WALLACE: We have had money coming from a federal government that at last takes Queensland seriously. There are projects right across the state including the Bruce Highway, a key federal road; the Townsville port access in my neck of the woods, a really important piece of infrastructure for which we fought and fought for nearly 20 years and we could not get a zack from John Howard, his mates and the mates of the member for Maroochydore. It took the election of a Labor government to get that money. I make no apologies for it.

Ms SIMPSON: I will go back to the output summary. If you were to add up the state contribution on page 2-182 for road system planning, road program development delivery, road corridor network operations and community transport access support, it lists the state contributions as coming to just over \$2 billion under the state line. However, as administered items for the Commonwealth are now paid by Treasury and appear within the state contribution, I ask you again: of that \$2 billion figure, how much is actually federal funds?

Mr WALLACE: I suppose I can go back to my previous answer in that we will get significant funds from the federal government, and that is welcomed—

Ms SIMPSON: This year how much of that figure is federally funded?

Mr WALLACE: Page 2-182 talks about the operating funds for the department, not the capital funding. That is where the member for Maroochydore is a little confused. I will continue to talk about that important federal capital—

Ms SIMPSON: With respect, Minister, Commonwealth revenue is separately listed; under the change of arrangements it is now no longer separately listed.

CHAIR: Will the member for Maroochydore please cease interjecting. I have been patient and I have allowed it, but that is two interjections in the one question. The minister is entitled to answer the question without interruption. I ask the minister to please continue.

Mr WALLACE: I will continue to talk about our cooperation with the federal government because it is important to provide better roads for Queenslanders right across the state. I suggest that the member for Maroochydore goes outside of the south-east corner, travels the state and talks to people

about their roads. I had the federal member for Maranoa, Mr Scott, in yesterday talking about the Warrego Highway, another federal highway. Mr Scott agreed that federal funding for that road over previous years has been moribund as has federal funding for federal roads right across Queensland. That is why the Rudd government needs a pat on the back for coming to the table and injecting a significant amount of funds into the federal road system across the state. These projects will allow us to roll out projects across Queensland. Consider that we have almost \$2.7 billion for the Bruce Highway between Caloundra and Cairns when it took 11 years for John Howard to fund around \$800-odd million. There is \$1.2 billion for the Dinmore to Goodna section of the Ipswich Motorway, \$455 million for the Pacific Motorway, \$55 million for that Warrego Highway that I was talking about and a \$30 million allocation to improve local roads in the Cape York region.

Indeed, I note the federal government's commitment to the new Einasleigh bridge for the Etheridge council. I travelled that Gregory Development Road and Kennedy Development Road and travelled up to Georgetown a couple of weeks ago and looked at that site. We have received \$18 million from the federal government. Had the previous administration been there they would not have got a zac; they would not have got a brass razoo for it.

We will continue to work with our colleagues in Canberra to get even more funds for our national road system. For 40 years we were underfunded and now the member for Maroochydore comes into this place and questions, I think, that federal commitment for roads. I make no apologies for getting down to Canberra or speaking to Anthony Albanese or the Prime Minister—whoever's ear I can grab—and saying, 'We want more money for our federal roads in Queensland.' It is a \$3.53 billion program this year—30,000 jobs.

Ms SIMPSON: With the merger of the Main Roads and Transport departments the staff are on different agreements, which means that many Main Roads staff are paid more than Transport staff in similar positions. Do former Main Roads staff face a wage cut or are former Transport staff going to get a pay rise to match them? How many people are affected and when will this be resolved?

Mr WALLACE: That is actually a very good question from the member for Maroochydore and I thank her for the question. It is correct that the newly merged Department of Transport and Main Roads has staff on different enterprise bargaining agreements. Staff from the former Queensland Transport are on the government's core enterprise agreement; staff from the former department of main roads are on a different enterprise agreement.

Mr Stewart: No secret.

Mr WALLACE: No secret. It has never been a secret. The pay rates and conditions of each agreement are different, even though many of our 9,000 full-time employees undertake similar roles. My director-general has had discussions with the Queensland Public Sector Union general secretary, Mr Alex Scott, on two occasions. We are very keen to resolve this matter as soon as possible, and we want equity and parity for our staff. I am also keen to ensure that my department continues to negotiate in a fair and balanced manner on this issue. Mr Stewart, do you want to add to that particular response as you are assisting in these negotiations?

Mr Stewart: I think it is really important to understand that our department has 10,835 employees. It is a significant department. These discussions with a number of unions are very important. It is an issue that we recognise; it is an issue that we are actually tackling. We will continue to have those discussions, but it is important also to have a consistent policy through and across government. We are not the only department that has been merged that has seen these issues and we do want to have a consistent process. We have taken up the challenge. We are talking to our employees. Our employees understand the parity issue and we will sort it out, but it is important that we do it in a measured way. We do have a significant workforce. We also have a very large casual workforce. It is important that we actually try to manage both of those areas.

Mr WALLACE: Over 10,000 employees.

Mr Stewart: They are considerable. We actually have school crossing supervisors and a lot of casual employees who actually make a huge difference to everyday life. But the important factor in the merged department is our key focus on customer service and our key focus on delivering a record infrastructure program.

Mr WALLACE: The one thing that we will not be doing is sacking 12,000 staff across the Public Service. That would have had significant impacts on the Department of Main Roads and Transport. We employ everything from the lollipop ladies and gentlemen at the school crossings to very senior and well-educated engineers across our two departments. Now that it has come together as one there will be this issue, and my director-general and I make a commitment to the workers and to the unions involved that we will sit down and negotiate in good faith with them. We will not be sacking 12,000 public sector workers from our government system, as the opposition had planned to do before the election.

Mr Stewart: We have had very positive discussions with the QPSU, as I had discussions with APESMA last week. We will continue to interact and engage. There are no secrets.

Ms SIMPSON: I note that we still do not know if people are getting pay rises or pay cuts.

Mr WALLACE: Member for Maroochydore.

Ms SIMPSON: I refer you to employee expenses at page 2-194. I note a substantial cut in employee expenses for the newly merged department of about \$56 million, yet the total number of employees for the department remains largely stable. How is this possible?

Mr WALLACE: If I can go back to the comments from the member for Maroochydore, I thought it would have been impressed on you in this answer that we are working through this issue with the employees. If you do not want to listen then do not listen, but please.

My department, as the director-general has advised the committee, has over 10,000 workers. One has to compare apples with apples when doing that. We constantly have movement of workers into different areas of our department. Projects may finish which would mean that very highly skilled employees are used in different roles, or some of our casual workforce may actually be increased as we undertake certain roles. Our employee bill for the previous year would have had certain impacts on it from things like the massive oil spill which RoadTek responded to very, very quickly. We had to pay particular wage rates accordingly. Also the massive floods over a lot of Queensland would have had an impact. At one stage 80 per cent of Queensland was under flood. Our workers responded to that immediately and are expected to respond to that immediately. Indeed, with that unfortunate accident that occurred on the Gateway Bridge last night we had RoadTek crews out immediately, which affects our payments. Mr Stewart, do you want to add anything to that?

Mr Stewart: I think the other point is that we, as a major economic part of the government, have actually been given very clear opportunities around making savings and we are doing that. We are doing that across the department. We are going to achieve our target savings by improving our travel expenditure. We are going to minimise travel in this department and to focus on intrastate travel.

CHAIR: The next round of questions will be from government members. I call the member for Capalaba.

Mr CHOI: Minister, a lot of my constituents in the electorate of Capalaba and, in fact, citizens in the Redland City Council area utilise the Gateway Bridge. We are very grateful for the government's duplication of the bridge. The approach to the bridge is also important—the Gateway upgrade south and the Gateway upgrade north projects. Can the minister detail for the committee the planning for delivery of these two projects?

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, member for Capalaba. You have a great interest in what happens on that Gateway Bridge and what we are doing with that massive \$1.88 billion program. I draw to the attention of the committee this report, the Integrated Regional Transport Plan, released by a former transport and main roads minister, Mr Johnson, who is still in the parliament, which talks about transport pricing being an efficient way to restrain travel demand. Mr Johnson actually said when he was transport and main roads minister that governments should be looking at different pricing options when it comes to tolling. That is an interesting point that I make to the committee in light of the earlier comments from the member for Maroochydore in terms of tolling.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads has been actively planning the upgrade of the next two sections of the Gateway Motorway through 2007 and 2008. Gateway upgrade south planning and community consultation, which began in 2007, is complete with final communication of the preferred planning option currently underway. You have certainly expressed to me a great interest in some of that planning, member for Capalaba.

This project will reduce traffic congestion and provide significant benefits in connecting the Gateway upgrade project, currently underway, with the Pacific Motorway and Gateway Motorway extension to the south. The preferred plan aims to upgrade 4.5 kilometres of the Gateway Motorway between and including the interchanges with Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road and the Pacific Motorway.

My department has also been undertaking a planning study into the upgrading of 16 kilometres of the Gateway Motorway from Nudgee to the Bruce Highway and interchanges. This planning began last year and more detailed assessment is required before a preferred option is ready for consultation. It is anticipated that the development of the business case for Gateway upgrade south will begin later this year, dependent upon approvals for funding.

Some major causes of congestion have been identified on the existing Gateway Motorway north. In order to address congestion in the interim, the department proposes to develop a potential solution of an additional northbound lane on the Gateway Motorway between Sandgate Road on-ramp and the Depot Road on-ramp. The opening this weekend of the new stretch of motorway that I talked about earlier, north of the Gateway for through traffic, will also have an impact on alleviating congestion.

The federal and state governments have jointly allocated \$20 million for the current planning studies for the north and south upgrades, along with further commitment under the nation-building program from 2008-09 to 2013-14 of \$195 million for Gateway Motorway corridor upgrades. With the \$1.88 billion Gateway Upgrade Project coming online in stages over the next couple of years and

planning underway for further upgrades to the south and north, Gateway Motorway users can look forward to improved and safer travel on this route. It shows, member for Capalaba, that we are planning for the future in Main Roads. We are really looking at the future growth on that very busy section of motorway.

CHAIR: Page 121 of the Capital Statement notes that Queensland and, finally, Australian government funding has been committed to commence upgrading the Bruce Highway. I think you might have referred to the Cooroy and Curra area. Can the minister advise the committee on the timing for this much needed project?

Mr WALLACE: I would be delighted. I am pleased to announce that the preliminary works on the first section of the Bruce Highway between Cooroy and Curra have started. The project will be constructed in four sections: section A, section B, section C and section D. Section B is the section that we have started work on, and it has recently been successful in gaining vital Infrastructure Australia funding under the Australian government's Building Australia Fund. We welcome the Rudd government's \$488 million contribution to section B from the main budget. This has been boosted by our contribution from the state of \$125 million, making the total \$613 million.

The upgrade has been designed to cope with increasing traffic volumes and industry demands and will ultimately result in better connectivity between Gympie and Brisbane. Importantly, section B of the project will provide employment benefits for the region with around 1,600 direct and indirect jobs created for the duration of the project which will deliver on our commitment to create and protect jobs for Queenslanders.

The major earthworks package is expected to be awarded late in August and it is anticipated that construction of this section will be completed in 2012. Planning for section A will begin shortly and completed in mid-2011. Design is proposed for late 2011 to late 2012, should we get further federal funding. In advance of the full upgrade, significant safety improvements to the Cooroy-Curra section of the highway have been made. Improvements have included a speed reduction to 90 kilometres per hour between Cooroy and Wide Bay, commencing the installation of intelligent transport system infrastructure including variable message signs and cameras and other interim works to increase the capacity on key sections of this stretch of the highway. So we are not sitting idly by; we are actually out there trying to make this very busy section of the highway safer.

The Bligh government is committed to delivering a safer, more efficient highway between Cooroy and Curra to help service the people of Queensland. We will continue to lobby the federal government for funding to build the remaining sections of this important road network.

CHAIR: Before calling the member for Whitsunday, I remind officers that mobiles need to be switched off.

Ms JARRATT: Page 2-177 of the Service Delivery Statement refers to bridges constructed under the Regional Bridge Renewal Program. Many of these bridges will now also be named as part of the Bligh government's Q150 bridge-naming project. Indeed, I had the great honour to chair one of those committees in my own region. Can you please outline for the committee how the bridge-naming project is progressing across the state?

Mr WALLACE: It is progressing very well, member for Whitsunday. As I said earlier, we have named the new Houghton Highway bridge duplication the Ted Smout Memorial Bridge. I think it is a great way of remembering a great Queenslanders. We have had more than 800 Queenslanders taking up the once-in-a-lifetime chance to name a bridge as part of our Q150 celebrations. From the Mulgrave River in Far North Queensland to Macintyre Brook near the southern border, communities have come together to name 63 bridges and other structures such as tunnels that connect Queensland.

The bridge-naming program celebrates the important role bridges have in linking communities and building our state's prosperity. It includes bridges of many descriptions—old and new, big and small, timber and concrete. More importantly, the naming program has given people the opportunity to reflect on what is special about their community and come up with a name that will be a lasting public commemoration of our 150th birthday.

Queenslanders were encouraged to think outside the square and not only consider the names of significant people but also be inspired by local features including events or traditions, plants or animals or geographical landmarks. Local decision-making panels which include community representatives have been established to consider all submissions and choose one—an interesting but tough job indeed.

Five of the 11 bridges in the metropolitan region, which covers Brisbane and Ipswich, to be named as part of this project have been named. These five bridges are part of the Centenary Highway extension and on Monday, as I said, I was pleased to announce the Houghton Highway duplication in honour of Ted Smout.

In Cairns, Cloncurry, the Gold Coast, Mackay and the Sunshine Coast, the panels have met in the past month. I am looking forward to considering names that your committee in particular, member for Whitsunday, recommends. Today I am pleased to announce another new name. The new name for the

bridge over the Comet River on the Capricorn Highway will be the Ludwig Leichhardt Bridge. This name commemorates the famous explorer who named the Comet River in 1845 after sighting a comet in the night sky. He discovered several rivers in North Queensland I thought I heard the member for Hinchinbrook interject. Leichhardt made several camps along the Comet River during his epic journey from the Darling Downs to Port Essington in the Northern Territory.

On the topic of the Capricorn Highway, we are delivering on our election commitment to build four new overtaking lanes on the Capricorn Highway between Bushley and the Leichhardt Highway intersection. This project is part of the \$100 million three-year Sustainable Resources Communities Agreement Fund. Planning and design is currently underway and construction is on track to begin on site in early 2011. The project is expected to create 48 jobs for the region, meaning this project delivers on two election commitments—creating jobs and delivering more overtaking lanes on the Capricorn Highway.

Mr CHOI: Minister, I was reading the Service Delivery Statement and I came across the Gregory Development Road north of Charters Towers. That is not exactly a stone's throw away from my electorate, but I remember that you mentioned to me some time ago that you were going there because there was some problem. Can you tell me what happened and what the outcome is?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Capalaba. I would be delighted to. It is a very busy section of road north of Charters Towers. I drove that route, as I said earlier to the committee, a couple of weeks ago. My fondest memory is watching the last State of Origin game—the one we won in Sydney—in a motel in Georgetown and seeing Queensland win the State of Origin. I was a long way from home but it was a good result.

The road between Charters Towers and Mount Garnet includes the Gregory Development Road and the Kennedy Development Road, which also forms the Kennedy Highway. Its total length is about 421 kilometres. In recent years increasing heavy vehicle and tourism traffic has impacted on the road between Charters Towers and Mount Garnet, particularly on the old and narrow 6.3-metre wide bitumen section. This was one of the original beef roads, if you like, that was delivered in North Queensland. The road is affected by seasonal rain, causing road closures and road restrictions which impact on local industry. The member for Hinchinbrook will certainly recall the big wet season we had in North Queensland. I was speaking to residents of Georgetown while I was up there and they believe that they had about five times their average annual rainfall this year.

On 24 and 25 June I travelled the Gregory Development Road and met with some key stakeholders who live and work along that road, such as the Upper Burdekin Progress Association and livestock haulage operators. It was a commitment I made immediately after the March election that I would travel the route and experience firsthand the issues faced by those using the road. I am fully aware of this road's importance to the mining and primary industries in the region. That is why the Bligh government has committed \$65 million over five years to widen about 90 kilometres of narrow pavement along this route. That was certainly welcomed by locals.

To date, two widening projects on the Gregory Development Road have been completed and all widening projects on the Kennedy Highway are nearly complete. This financial commitment illustrates the Bligh government's support for economic growth in Queensland. Current work is focused on widening and strengthening narrow sections of the road to provide safe passing opportunities and increase safety to travellers. They get a lot of grey nomads with caravans on that section of road. They are welcome by locals as they are seen as an injection into their local economy. As a priority, the department is also undertaking the urgent repair of flood damage on the road. This work is extensive and is expected to be completed by December this year.

In October last year a road management plan was approved that provides an integrated approach to improving and effectively managing driver safety and communication with travellers while the upgrading works are taking place. This plan was importantly presented to the Blueprint for the Bush forum held in Charters Towers on 10 and 11 November last year. The planned upgrade of the information warning road signage was completed on 1 May 2009. While \$65 million is a significant investment in this route, I have given my commitment that I will do everything I can to secure more funding for this road to make it safer for those who use it.

CHAIR: Minister, page 2-177 of the Service Delivery Statement notes the completion in 2008-09 of the new section of the Townsville Ring Road—close to home. Can the minister advise the committee how this project and other related projects, such as the Woodlands to Veales upgrade on the Bruce Highway and the forthcoming duplication of the Douglas Arterial Road, will benefit motorists in the minister's home region?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the honourable member for the question. We talked about some of the beautiful electorates across the state but by far the most beautiful electorate is that of Thuringowa. I will get in trouble. As you said, they are very important pieces of infrastructure. I can see the member for Hinchinbrook shaking his head. He has inherited part of my electorate which is a nice piece of your real estate now as well.

The Townsville Ring Road, the Woodlands to Veales upgrade and the duplication of the Douglas Arterial Road are part of the Bligh government's strategic vision to improve the efficiency of the road network around Townsville. The \$119 million Townsville Ring Road not only provides freight companies with a more efficient route around Townsville but also improves road safety and efficiency for tourists and local residents, shortening the travel times to destinations around Townsville by approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

Members may be aware that we had a very successful race meet in Townsville on the weekend—the V8s. There were around 170,000 spectators. I monitored many of those road movements and they used that network very well.

Mr Foley interjected.

Mr WALLACE: No. The police who I have spoken to said it was a very well-behaved crowd. So that new road infrastructure has served us very, very well since its opening a couple of months ago. Also, importantly, it is close to the home of the North Queensland Cowboys, Dairy Farmers Stadium, and it has made entrance to and egress much easier as fans travel to and from those games.

This vital road infrastructure is a major boost for North Queensland. It is a national highway link around Townsville that provides local residents with more direct access to the Townsville Hospital, James Cook University and Lavarack Barracks. About 897 direct and indirect jobs were created during the two-year construction period of stages 2 and 3 of that ring-road project. Importantly, the \$110 million duplication of the Douglas Arterial Road will improve the efficiency of the ring-road by widening the first section to four lanes.

The \$52 million Woodlands to Veales project, which includes a rail overpass into Mount Low Parkway, in the member for Hinchinbrook's electorate, and Bushland Beach, has dramatically improved travelling times for residents on the northern beaches. I campaigned for a long time to get funding for that particular project. I am sure, as the member for Hinchinbrook will also testify to, it is a very dangerous section of road which has now been improved by this action. This overpass provides a better link for motorists from Bushland Beach and Mount Low to the Bruce Highway and has reduced congestion at that Mount Low Parkway intersection.

There is certainly a lot of road activity happening around Townsville at the moment and it does not end there. Preliminary works will begin within weeks on the new Abbott Street deviation, which will move more traffic away from Abbott Street to a new road west of the railway line. This \$12 million project will link with a connected road, Lakeside Drive, to be constructed between the Bruce Highway and Oonoonba Road.

Mr WELLS: When I was reading page 2-177 of the Service Delivery Statement, which indicates that the department has progressed the delivery of the federally funded accelerated Bruce Highway upgrade package north of Townsville, it occurred to me that this might be part of the solution to the problem of how to get all the tourists from Cairns back to Townsville, which is where of course they really want to go. Could the minister outline to the committee how the delivery of this package is benefiting North and Far North Queensland?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Murrumba for the question. It is a very important question for those of us who live in North Queensland. I spoke earlier about how in the last term I got mayors together from Sarina to Cairns to fight for more funding for our federal highway, which had been neglected by the previous federal government. In June 2006 the state government received a \$347 million federal funding package under an MOU between the federal and state ministers for the accelerated Bruce Highway upgrade package. The package included \$128 million for upgrading the Bruce Highway south of Tully, and the member for Hinchinbrook would be acutely aware of the work that we did there. It also included \$220 million to be allocated to major flood immunity works along the Bruce Highway, Townsville to Cairns link, and to several minor flood immunity projects and lower cost safety works.

The \$172.4 million Tully project was open to traffic on 13 December 2008—12 months ahead of schedule. The \$30 million Tokalon Road to Lannercost Street project on the southern approach to Ingham was completed in September—four months ahead of schedule. There are those who say that we are behind in our delivery schedule. They are not looking at the package of works we are doing right across the state. Both projects experienced a significant flood event in February and were closed to traffic for only a short time rather than the significant closures of the past. That showed that our engineering and our design had worked.

My department has also reached another significant milestone in improving the Bruce Highway's flood immunity. The public release of the two zones of interest as part of the \$5 million federally funded flood planning study in the Ingham area—the study which began in 2008—aims to investigate the Herbert River floodplain between Rutledge Street, Ingham, and the foothills of the Cardwell Range to determine the best design options to the upgrade of flood immunity in this section of the highway. I hope the member for Hinchinbrook can make a contribution to that study, which will be of lasting benefit to his community.

These initial investigations have highlighted the need to divert the highway from its current alignment through Ingham and to build a new highway to the west which would effectively connect Rutledge Street to the Cardwell Range. It is important to note that these zones are broad bands of land, not actual road alignments. So we are taking these broad bands of land to the community for consultation. A decision on road alignment is some time off and the community will have an opportunity to be involved in the planning process.

We have thoroughly investigated the feasibility of upgrading the existing Bruce Highway through Ingham and it has been found that that is not a viable option. Upgrading the existing highway through Ingham would present significant engineering and flooding concerns. Studies have indicated this option would increase flooding in other areas of Ingham, and that is not something I am going to put residents through. An entirely new alignment would avoid these issues and provide additional safety benefits by reducing the number of heavy vehicles moving through the centre of Ingham. We will be consulting with the local community, as I said earlier.

CHAIR: The next round of questions will be from non-government members. I call the member for Maroochydore.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, in the Service Delivery Statement you claim on page 2-177 that Main Roads actively led road system planning across the transport sector by making robust submissions to the Australian government. However, roads under federal control such as the Warrego Highway continue to be overlooked, creating dangerous and deadly conditions. What guarantee can you give that the conditions which led to the death referred to in this week's coroner's report will be rectified?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the honourable member for the question. Any death on our highway is a terrible thing to occur. Unfortunately, it comes to my attention sometimes that these deaths have occurred. I have written to the federal infrastructure minister, Mr Albanese, with the findings of the coroner's report and have brought them to his attention. I have said here this morning that one of my major goals is to get further funding for all of our federal roads across Queensland, and the Warrego is certainly included.

Mr Stewart: I drove that highway two weeks ago to inspect it as well. It certainly needs some attention.

Mr WALLACE: Yesterday, as I said, I met with the member for Maranoa, Mr Scott. He and I both agreed that this was too important an issue to play politics with. I agreed with him to go to Canberra to speak to Mr Albanese and the federal government to lobby for more funds for that road.

Our estimates are that to bring the safety and efficiency of the Warrego up to a reasonable standard requires minimum funding of \$600 million. I have said it here and I will say it again: we were chronically underfunded by governments of all persuasions for 40 years for our federal road system, and the Warrego is one of them. I make that commitment to get out there and fight for further funding for this road.

That \$600 million that we have identified would help investments to provide for four-laning the Warrego Highway between Toowoomba and Oakey, upgrading critical rural intersections identified as high-crash risks, road widening and pavement strengthening between Dalby and Miles, rehabilitation of the Oakey bypass, widening of floodways and culverts, replacement of Dogwood Creek Bridge at Miles and widening of the Bungil Creek Bridge. The amount of \$55 million has been committed under the Nation Building Program to provide \$40 million for widening and strengthening works between Roma and Mitchell—and yesterday Mr Scott was pleased to see that funding—\$5 million for construction of new or upgraded rest areas, and \$10 million for overtaking lanes on the Warrego Highway between Oakey and Dalby to improve safety and network efficiency. Those rest areas are very important for—

Mr Stewart: They are making a huge difference to our truckies.

Mr WALLACE: There are a number of heavy vehicles using that road—and we have seen an increase in heavy vehicles—and these allow truckies to have a good rest. We are doing that right across the state. I have got to thank the federal government because they have contributed significant funds for that program as well.

CHAIR: I remind all officers that these two sessions of questions will be 10 minutes each.

Ms SIMPSON: The Toowoomba second range crossing has again slipped in the SEQIPP released yesterday and is now listed as possibly not being completed until 2026. How do you as minister justify continuing to ignore such a dangerous section of road which more and more trucks are using as rail services to the west of Queensland are slashed? Isn't it true that your allegedly robust submissions to the Commonwealth government are really just an excuse for inaction?

Mr WALLACE: No, it is not true. That is absolutely incorrect—again, absolutely incorrect from the 'Chicken Little' of Queensland politics. We made strong representations to Canberra to get funding for this much needed bypass. In fact it has been the local member out there, Kerry Shine, who has said to the federal government on his side that we need to fund this. That other side sat mute. The member for

Maroochydore sat mute for 11 years while her mates ran the federal government in Canberra and did not build this bypass. It has been this government that has done the work, that has built a business case, that has done the studies.

Mr Stewart: There is the pilot tunnel.

Mr WALLACE: We built a pilot tunnel and said to the federal government in Canberra, 'We need the funds to build this bypass, to build this road.' It was this government that said to Canberra, 'You need to build it,' and we remain committed to pushing for those funds. I have said here, and I will repeat it again for the member for Maroochydore's information, that Queensland has been chronically underfunded by previous federal governments for over 40 years and this is another symptom of that underfunding.

They sat mute for 11 years. Indeed, I think their local member was a senior minister in the Howard government. He was a senior minister in the Howard government and he did not secure funding for that project. The member for Maroochydore can only hang her head in shame with the fact that your side of politics did not stand up for the people of Toowoomba, did not stand up for the people of the Darling Downs and in fact did not stand up for people right across Queensland who were crying out for more federal road funding.

We remain committed to fighting for further funding for the Toowoomba bypass. That business case that I mentioned for the Toowoomba bypass was completed in March last year. That enabled us and the federal government to jointly determine project priority funding arrangements and the preferred delivery option. The study was released by the federal government—it was their study—on 1 May this year I think.

Mr Stewart: That is right.

Mr WALLACE: The Toowoomba bypass project was rigorously analysed in accordance with Queensland's PPP value-for-money framework. The analysis indicated that a PPP delivery option does not represent better value for money in comparison to a traditional government option. So what it says is that we will need significant funding from the federal government for this option to work.

Mr Stewart: It was a priority submission from us to Infrastructure Australia. We do see this as a very important project.

Mr WALLACE: And we will continue to see it as a very important project. The project cost is estimated at \$1.75 billion in outturn costs based on 2010 dollars if constructed between 2010 and 2013. You can see it is a significant piece of infrastructure, one which I take very, very seriously and one which I will continue to fight for.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, my question is in regard to the Cooroy-Curra stretch of the Bruce Highway. In choosing which section of the highway would be sequenced for upgrade, was safety the state government's highest priority or was this section chosen and the road designed to enable the stalled Traveston Crossing Dam to proceed?

Mr WALLACE: I have said in parliament and I have said publicly before that safety is my department's No. 1 priority. This section of the Bruce Highway is, quite frankly, a dangerous section of road. I constantly hear comments from the member for Wide Bay, Mr Truss, that we and Canberra have not done enough on this section of road. He conveniently forgets, as the member for Maroochydore did in her previous question—in fact I think he was the transport minister in the Howard government and did not fund the upgrade of this section of road—

Ms SIMPSON: It was funded.

Mr WALLACE: It has taken a Labor government in Canberra and a Labor government working with them in Brisbane to deliver on this very, very dangerous section of road, and I make no apologies for that.

Ms SIMPSON: Why did you sequence this one first as opposed to the section just north of Cooroy?

Mr WALLACE: We all saw the ambulance officer from Gympie who had been to too many accidents saying to the Prime Minister and Mr Albanese, 'Please fund this section of road.' I can only conclude from the behaviour of the member for Maroochydore that she does not agree with this funding.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, with respect, I have asked you to explain the sequencing. You have not four-laned north of Cooroy. It goes four lanes, two lanes, four lanes, two lanes.

CHAIR: Order! Would the member please cease interjecting. We are not going to get anywhere in this committee if this continues with every question. Minister, please continue with your answer.

Mr WALLACE: I can only take it that the member for Maroochydore disagrees with our funding for the Bruce Highway for Cooroy to Curra.

Ms SIMPSON: Madam Chair, I will respond to the minister—

Mr WALLACE: I will be making it known to the people who live up there who have to suffer on this very dangerous section of highway—

Ms SIMPSON: On a point of order, Madam Chair: the minister is misleading the committee. The point I have asked the minister to clarify is why the sequencing does not go directly north of Cooroy.

CHAIR: There is no point of order.

Ms SIMPSON: Why have they sequenced it? We support funding the bypass. I am asking you why you have sequenced this section as opposed to north of Cooroy.

CHAIR: There is no point of order. Would the minister please continue with his answer.

Mr WALLACE: Madam Chair, thank you for your protection. Safety comes first for my department. Just like that ambulance officer at Gympie, I will do everything in my power to keep Queenslanders safe.

CHAIR: The next round of questions will be from government members.

Mr CHOI: This is another question to you on the Bruce Highway. Can you explain to the committee the realignment project on the Bruce Highway at the Cardwell Range?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the honourable member for his question because, like the Cooroy to Curra section, that section of the range is an important project on the Bruce Highway. Again, I go back to what I said before: the previous Howard government did nothing, they sat on their hands. Again, mute federal members of that tory party stood by and did nothing for 11 years on our Bruce Highway.

The Cardwell Range project will align a section of the Bruce Highway starting approximately 15 kilometres north of Ingham. The 4.2 kilometre realignment will eliminate substantial horizontal and vertical alignments, reducing the severity of the existing grades and providing climbing lanes on both sides of the range for heavy vehicles. It will also eliminate the open level crossing of the railway line on the northern side of the range. The project will significantly reduce the steepness of the road grade on the range, which will in turn help to improve transport efficiency and safety on this section of the Bruce Highway.

Townsville and surrounding regions have strongly advocated the construction of this project, and I know the member for Hinchinbrook would be a very strong advocate for these works. The federal government has committed \$96.95 million to the project, and this has been well publicised in Townsville and right across North Queensland. As the member for Murrumba said, this is the major piece of road infrastructure that needs to be fixed to allow residents and tourists to travel from Cairns to Townsville. In fact they might be travelling down to Murrumba.

The preliminary design of the project is complete and will continue, using our good relationship with the Rudd government to secure more funding for this important project. When funding has been secured, we can press on with delivering this realignment for the people of North and Far North Queensland. It is a good project and one that I am proud to be delivering to the people of the north.

CHAIR: Page 2-174 of the Service Delivery Statement refers to the rolling out of a five-year heavy vehicle rest areas program. I think the minister referred to this before. As I have a really keen interest in occupational health and safety, can the minister advise the committee how this program will act to improve safety for Queensland's long-haul truck drivers?

Mr WALLACE: That is a very good question from the member for Brisbane Central and Chair. I referred to it when we were talking about the Warrego Highway and the rest stops we are putting in there. The rollout of the five-year heavy vehicle rest areas program supports the Bligh government's aim to provide a safe, efficient and reliable road network by providing all heavy vehicle drivers, including long-haul drivers, with a place to take their mandatory or necessary rest breaks.

Mr Stewart: We have the best fatigue laws in this country.

Mr WALLACE: They are very important in terms of occupational health and safety. It enables those drivers to meet their fatigue management requirements. This statewide \$47.1 million program will provide 52 new or upgraded heavy vehicle rest areas and stopping places between 2008-09 and 2013-14. So that is 52 new or upgraded rest areas. This initiative uses both federal and state funding. It is another example of working with Canberra to provide better infrastructure on our roads. In fact \$25.6 million has been provided through federal funding under the Nation Building Program, the heavy vehicle safety and productivity package and the safety and urgent minor works program. This federal funding is complemented further with \$21.5 million provided through state programs, including the Safer Roads Sooner camera-detected offences and the department's driver fatigue management program. The program will provide heavy vehicle rest areas in strategic locations on key freight routes right throughout the state of Queensland.

Mr Stewart: I saw a number of the new facilities on the road between Longreach and Winton two weeks ago. They were very well utilised.

Mr WALLACE: Indeed, I met with the group campaigning in Mackay when I opened the Bucasia Road, and they were very keen to see further rest stops rolled out, especially on the Bruce Highway, for some of those big haulage routes between Rockhampton and Mackay. There are 10 on the Bruce Highway, five on the Warrego Highway, five on the Gregory Development Road, four each on the Burnett and Landsborough highways, three each on the Cunningham Highway and Gulf Development

Road, two each on the Dawson, Flinders, Leichhardt and Moonie highways and the Kennedy Development Road, and a further rest area for each of the Balonne, Capricorn, Castlereagh, D'Aguiar, Gore and New England highways as well as the Burke Development Road and the Mundubbera-Durong Road.

Further upgrading of existing heavy vehicle rest areas continues to be undertaken by the Department of Transport and Main Roads in regions as funding becomes available. For example, the south-west region was able to provide upgrades, including toilets, for several heavy vehicle rest areas and is planning to invest \$500,000 on upgrading two more sites on the Mitchell Highway by December. Also, the inclusion of heavy vehicle rest areas in the design of the major projects, such as the Cooroy to Curra project on the Bruce Highway, continues to be a high priority.

Mr WELLS: I refer to government question on notice No. 3 and refer again to the Bruce Highway, this time the section between the Gateway and Caboolture. I travel this very frequently, and I would like to thank the minister and his department for the work they are doing which will greatly benefit my constituents. For example, it takes 16 minutes to get from the start of the Deagon Deviation to the Rothwell roundabout. Do you have any information about how this will benefit the residents of the Moreton Bay Regional Council area and the Sunshine Coast Regional Council area generally?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the honourable member for the question. The Bligh government is committed to providing quality infrastructure to meet the future social and transport needs of South-East Queensland's fastest growing regions of Moreton Bay and the Sunshine Coast. One such example is the Bruce Highway upgrade from the Gateway to Caboolture. The federal government has committed \$361 million to upgrade the highway from four to six lanes. With the \$183 million final phase of the upgrade from Uhlmann Road to Caboolture almost complete, motorists are already reaping the benefits of improved travel times and traffic flows. The member for Murrumba will be seeing some of those benefits. Of course, increased reliability and increased safety are other highlights.

With safety a key concern for my government, this upgrade features wire rope barriers installed on both sides of the median to reduce the potential for cross-median crashes. Closed-circuit cameras are installed at strategic locations along the upgrade which are linked to the Main Roads Traffic Management Centre, where operators can monitor traffic flow and communicate with motorists using variable message signs and radio messages. The anti-throw screens fitted to the Caboolture-Bribie Island Road overpass will provide protection to highway traffic from items being thrown from the overpass.

This upgrade also includes improving several interchanges and widening bridges, which provides safer access between the fast-growing local communities as well as supports the livability of the Moreton and Sunshine Coast regions. To cater for all road users, the Caboolture-Bribie Island Road interchange has been upgraded to provide dedicated pedestrian facilities and wider road shoulders to provide for the growing number of cyclists. It is important that we continue to roll out that infrastructure for cyclists.

With the rapid population growth from Moreton Bay to the Sunshine Coast, this highway upgrade provides improved links for motorists to access employment opportunities right across South-East Queensland. The highway upgrade will increase efficiency for business, thereby allowing the creation of new job opportunities in these areas.

Tourism on the Sunshine Coast will benefit from the improved access provided by the additional highway lanes. As the Bruce Highway is the primary north-south freight route, all road users are winners from this upgrade, including the important state-wide commercial industry as well.

CHAIR: I do not think there is enough time for another question. So, there being no further questions, that concludes the examination of the estimates for the portfolio of the Minister for Main Roads. I take this opportunity to thank the minister and the officers for their attendance.

For the information of those attending today, the hearing transcript for this portfolio will be available on the parliament's website in approximately two hours. The committee will now adjourn for lunch and resume at 1 pm. From that time, the committee will examine the proposed expenditure for organisational units within the portfolio of the Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs. The minister may wish to make some thankyou.

Mr WALLACE: I thank committee members for their attendance this morning. I thank my office staff, who have worked very hard to assist me to come up to speed with a big program, especially as I have been in the portfolio for less than four months. I also thank my departmental staff who every estimates put in a great effort. I make special mention of Mr Alan Tesch, my associate director-general. Unfortunately Alan suffered a very serious accident last week and is unable to be here. I am sure that the best wishes of the committee go to Mr Tesch. I thank Mr Ford for jumping in at the last moment.

CHAIR: Please pass on the committee's best wishes to Alan Tesch on behalf of the committee.

Proceedings suspended from 12.01 pm to 1 pm

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D—DISABILITY SERVICES AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

In Attendance

Hon. A Palaszczuk, Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs

Ms B Smith, Senior Policy Advisor

Department of Communities

Ms L Apelt, Director-General

Mr I Fulton, Chief Financial Officer

Ms K Bullock, Director, Financial Services

Mr G Page, Executive Director, Multicultural Affairs Queensland

CHAIR: Good afternoon. The hearing of Estimates Committee D is now resumed. On behalf of the committee I welcome the minister, departmental officers, officers of statutory bodies and members of the public to the hearing. I am Grace Grace MP, the member for Brisbane Central and chair of the committee. Ms Fiona Simpson MP, the member for Maroochydore, is the deputy chair. The other committee members are Mr Andrew Cripps MP, member for Hinchinbrook; Mr Michael Choi MP, member for Capalaba; Mr Chris Foley MP, member for Maryborough; Ms Jan Jarratt MP, member for Whitsunday; and the Hon. Dean Wells MP, member for Murrumba.

The next item for consideration is the proposed expenditure of the Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs. This afternoon the committee will adjourn proceedings for afternoon tea from 2.50 pm to 3.20 pm.

In the event that those attending today are not aware, the committee's proceedings are lawful proceedings and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the Queensland parliament. Members of the public are welcome to observe the proceedings but may not participate in the proceedings. In that regard, and in accordance with standing order 206, any person admitted to this hearing may be excluded by order of the committee or at my discretion as the chair. I also remind members, witnesses and members of the public that no food or drink is permitted to be consumed in the Legislative Council chamber.

The committee has resolved in relation to media coverage of the hearing that television film coverage, photographs and sound broadcast may be allowed for the chair's opening comments and the introductory statements of each minister and that television, film and photographic coverage be allowed at the change of organisational units being examined. The committee has also resolved that audio and video of the hearing recorded by the Parliamentary Service cameras and microphones in the Legislative Council chamber shall be broadcast by the Parliamentary Service via the service's website and to receivers throughout the parliamentary precinct. I now ask that all mobile phones and pagers be switched off.

I remind members of the committee and the minister that under standing orders the time limit for questions is one minute. Answers are to be no longer than three minutes. A single chime will give a 15-second warning and a double chime will sound at the end of each time limit. An extension of time may be given with the consent of the questioner. A double chime will sound two minutes after an extension of time has been given.

Standing orders require that at least half the time available for questions at today's hearing be allocated to non-government members. Any time expended when the committee deliberates in private is to be equally apportioned between government and non-government members. Government members and non-government members will take turns asking questions, generally in blocks lasting 20 minutes, commencing with non-government members. The committee has resolved that non-government members be given leave to attend to ask questions during the hearing today.

To assist Hansard, officers are asked to provide their names and positions prior to responding to a question referred to them by a minister. I declare open for examination the proposed expenditure for organisational units within the portfolio of the Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, under standing order 177 you are able to make an opening statement of no longer than five minutes. Would you like to make a brief introductory statement, or do you wish to proceed direct to questioning?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will make a brief introductory statement. The Queensland Labor government has a strong record in disability services. For the third year in a row the disability services portfolio budget exceeds \$1 billion. The total budget for disability services in 2009-10 is almost \$1.4 billion, an increase of more than \$164.6 million or an increase of more than 13 per cent on last year's budget. This year's \$1.4 billion disability services portfolio budget comprises \$926.2 million for specialist disability services, \$446.8 million towards the Home and Community Care program and \$26.1 million for non-clinical mental health services.

In the past 11 years the Queensland government's funding for specialist disability services has increased from \$250 million to a record \$926 million. The first priority area which the budget addresses is the Positive Futures reforms. \$26.8 million has been allocated in 2009-10 to continue the Specialist Response Service across the state and the innovative Centre of Excellence for Behavioural Support—that is, the implementation of the Carter reforms. A further \$15.3 million has been allocated in this budget to the Growing Stronger suite of reforms. The Growing Stronger reforms will deliver benefits for Queenslanders across the state who have a disability.

The budget will fund my key priorities, the first of which is early intervention. Developing early intervention services for children under the age of eight is one of my key priorities. That is why I recently hosted a ministerial round table forum to develop an action plan for children with a disability aged zero to eight. The action plan will improve access and coordination of early intervention services for children with a disability and their families. In addition, the Bligh government has allocated \$1.1 million over two years to pilot self-managed funding, which will give families more choice and flexibility in choosing the care and support for their children.

My second priority is ageing carers. One of the greatest fears of ageing parents caring for an adult child with a disability is: 'Who will care for them when I no longer can?' Through the Disability Assistance Package initiative the Bligh and Rudd governments have allocated \$18.3 million to provide more supported accommodation options for adult children with a disability and ageing carers.

My third priority is moving young people with a disability out of aged-care facilities into more appropriate accommodation. The Bligh and Rudd governments have equally invested \$23.9 million over five years as part of our commitment to assist younger people with a disability to find more age-appropriate accommodation. I am pleased to announce that the Younger People in Residential Aged Care Initiative has helped more than 80 younger people with a disability to find more age-appropriate accommodation since the program first started from 1 July 2006 until now. This includes 36 younger people with a disability who have been assisted to move out of residential aged care and a further 45 people with a disability who have been diverted from entering residential aged-care facilities. Once again, we have exceeded the targets set by the Commonwealth government.

I also want to comment that the member for Hinchinbrook has been out to Youngcare. I think that is a fantastic example of this great initiative. In 2009-10 the budget delivers our key 2009 election commitment to provide \$3 million over three years to provide support for younger people with a disability to live in a new Youngcare complex on the Gold Coast.

The Bligh government's foremost principle is to protect and create jobs. The total commitment of \$414 million over four years across a number of government agencies will make a real difference to the sector and the ongoing support and care of clients. This includes \$65 million in 2009-10, increasing to \$125 million recurrently by 2012-13. The popular Home and Community Care program—a jointly funded initiative between the Rudd and Bligh governments—will receive a further \$446.8 million in this budget.

The third area of the budget which I would like to cover is mental health services. This budget provides a total of \$26.1 million for non-clinical mental health services, with a focus on providing greater support to people transitioning from health facilities to the community.

The Bligh government has worked hard through a range of initiatives to support multiculturalism in Queensland. Almost \$6 million has been allocated over three years for the Local Area Multicultural Partnerships and Community Action for a Multicultural Society funding programs. In May I announced the continuation of funding for the Bundaberg-CAMS worker in response to the ongoing need for a CAMS worker in the region. This week I have responded to the need in Far North Queensland, and we will continue to fund a full-time CAMS worker in Cairns and they will also provide outreach services to the Tablelands. In addition, \$700,000 has been allocated for multicultural assistance grants for 2009-10.

Of course, this is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of support in this budget for people with a disability, those who are ageing or people with a mental illness and multicultural communities. This budget demonstrates our commitment to vulnerable Queenslanders who need support and services to live happy, productive and fulfilling lives.

Mr CRIPPS: Good afternoon, Minister, and good afternoon to your staff who are attending the committee hearing this afternoon. I refer to page 3-6 of the SDS which outlines \$26.1 million in recurrent funding for non-clinical mental health services, which you referred to in your opening remarks. Will the minister please advise the total amount of state government expenditure on these initiatives as distinct from any funding provided by the Commonwealth government for the provision of these services?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. As he rightly points out, in 2009-10 we have allocated \$26.1 million in recurrent funding for non-clinical mental health services. This is a very important part of our budget. Just recently the Minister for Health and I convened a round table to address mental health issues across Queensland. In October we hope to follow that up with one specifically dealing with the community mental health sector.

In relation to the member's specific question, I can advise that from 1993 to 2004-05 the Queensland government's overall expenditure on mental health services increased by 92 per cent, compared to the national average increase of 66.8 per cent. Queensland's per capita expenditure increased from \$66 to \$98. In addition, the Queensland government has further committed to expand funding to mental health services by \$895.1 million in the period from 2006 to 2011. This represents an unprecedented increase in expenditure for Queensland. Further, it is important to recognise that Queensland has consistently remained the fastest growing jurisdiction, with above-average population growth. In 2007 the state accounted for 28.7 per cent of the nation's population growth—more than its share of the national population and much larger than the contributions of both New South Wales and Victoria. This population growth will continue to impact significantly upon Queensland's per capita expenditure.

In relation to your specific question about the funding that is going out to the NGO sector, that is all state money. That is not Commonwealth money. I should clarify for the committee that, when it comes to mental health policy, that is actually set by the Minister for Health. In this portfolio my responsibilities are in relation to funding for the NGO sector, so community mental health.

Mr CRIPPS: So there are no Commonwealth funds in relation to those services?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No.

Mr CRIPPS: I refer to pages 3-25 to 3-27 of the SDS in relation to the satisfaction of service users in respect of accommodation support, community support, community access and respite services provided by DSQ. Satisfaction amongst service users using respite services rose by one per cent from 2007-08 to 2008-09, and I recognise that. However, satisfaction fell nine per cent amongst users of accommodation support services, 13 per cent amongst users of community support services and seven per cent amongst users of community access services during the same period. Can the minister please explain why client satisfaction rates have declined between seven and 13 per cent for these services and provide advice as to what DSQ intends to do to address this situation?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. Of course I have looked at these figures as well. In relation to satisfaction levels, we do surveys, which I think is a good thing. So we are getting the information about how we can improve things. I take on board that, where there has been a decrease in satisfaction level, we can do more. We will definitely be implementing any measures that we can to improve those services.

I would hope that over the next few years we would see an increase in the level of satisfaction. What the results from the 2009 satisfaction survey clearly show is that there was a greater proportion of respondents whose satisfaction rating was in between—that is, a greater number of respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the level of service provided. In addition, for the first time a statistically significant proportion of respondents participating in the survey opted not to rate their level of satisfaction with the services received. What that is essentially saying is that not everybody who was actually sent the survey form actually sent it back. There may be other service users out there who are completely satisfied but have not sent the forms back.

Mr CRIPPS: Following on from that, I wonder whether you would take on notice a request to provide service user satisfaction data for each of these four services for each of DSQ's regions reported separately.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you want us to go through the surveys that have come in and do a breakdown of the regions so you can have a regional proportion?

Mr CRIPPS: In relation to the four services, yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: For those four services.

Mr CRIPPS: Would that be acceptable?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes.

Mr CRIPPS: Thanks very much for that. That is much appreciated. Does the minister see any correlation between the failure of the government to expend its budget on important services, like community services and accommodation support, and the previously discussed decrease in satisfaction rates?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sorry, but can you repeat that question? Are you still referring to these surveys?

Mr CRIPPS: In relation to the decrease in the satisfaction rates, do you believe there is any correlation between the failure of the government to expend its budget on important services like community services and accommodation support services with these declining levels of satisfaction?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, because I think you will find that we have had a record budget over the years. There has been a dramatic increase in what we have actually given to disability services. When I go around the state and meet different people in the areas of accommodation and respite, they are very satisfied with the level of funding they are receiving. In relation to the allocation of funding to these services, there have been deferrals. The money does get out to the sector. Some money is carried over, but it is all committed.

We have made great inroads in actually providing services right across Queensland. From time to time people think that most of the services are centred in South-East Queensland. In terms of disability services, there are centres right across the state. We have a fantastic local area coordinator program where we provide outreach into the different regions. There have been answers to questions on notice which clearly show that our commitment to the non-government organisations out in the regions is very good.

For example, in the Darling Downs and south-west Queensland we have 64 NGO outlets. In Far North Queensland there are 42. In the Fitzroy and central west there are 41. There are a lot of people out there doing a lot of good work. On the Gold Coast there are 53. In the Mackay-Whitsunday area there are 28. In North Queensland there are 62. On the Sunshine Coast there are 74. In the Wide Bay-Burnett there are 70. We have over 300 NGO organisations doing a lot of good work right across Queensland.

Mr CRIPPS: Following up on that question, with respect to accommodation support services you recently advised me, as you mentioned earlier, to visit the Youngcare apartments. On Wednesday this week, as you mentioned earlier, I did inspect those Youngcare apartments. I was certainly very impressed with those facilities. I thank you very much for making the recommendation that I visit that facility. However, I am sure you will understand that not all cases in respect of accommodation support services are so positive. Will you accept my recommendation that you ought to meet with the family members of Mr Joshua McLean and Mr David Mason and their disability support advocates, Speaking Up for You, in respect of their ongoing difficulties negotiating an accommodation support package with DSQ?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy to follow-up on those matters separately. As you can appreciate, there is a lot of confidentiality around individual cases that I would prefer—

Mr CRIPPS: I do not want you to discuss the cases with me, Minister. I want you to accept my recommendation that you ought to meet with the families of Mr McLean and Mr Mason.

Ms PALASZCZUK: In relation to those two families that you have mentioned, I understand the department is currently working with them. I am happy to get more details from you and have a look at the case. I will give you my assurance that I will personally look at those individual cases. It is not unusual for me to meet with people but, as you would appreciate, I cannot meet with everybody. But, on a case-by-case basis, I am happy to look at the individual circumstances.

Mr CRIPPS: Referring to pages 3-25 and 3-26 of the SDS, can the minister explain why there was service underspending in state contributions from budgeted amounts to community services in the order of nearly \$15 million and to accommodation support services of nearly \$8 million?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The first one you are talking about on page 3-25 is Disability Services's accommodation services where the state contribution in 2008 was 363 and we spent 355?

Mr CRIPPS: In relation to accommodation support services, the target for 2008-09 was 363 and the actual expenditure was 355. In relation to community services, the target was 270 and the actual expenditure was 255. I am asking why there was an underspend in state contributions from those budgeted amounts.

Ms PALASZCZUK: For accommodation services it relates to deferrals. It is actually the same for community services. As you can see, our targeted estimate for community services this year is \$276 million and this year for accommodation support services it is \$384 million. There is no underspend; it is just the usual deferrals.

Mr CRIPPS: In the 'Highlights' section for the 2009-10 budget on page 3-3 of the SDS it states that the non-government sector delivers valuable support to a diverse range of people in the community. Following an Industrial Relations Commission decision awarding increased award rates for community sector workers, the Queensland government proposes to provide \$414 million over four years to assist non-government organisations meet the high cost of wages for their employees—and you mentioned that matter in your opening remarks. Will the minister advise what levels of funding support non-government organisations will receive, including any maximum amounts or any caps on funding, and what this equates to on average per employee for an NGO?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member for his question. As I stated in my opening comments to the committee today, our total commitment is \$414 million over four years across a number of government agencies. This is not just in my portfolio; it is across the portfolio of the Minister for Communities and also the portfolio of the Minister for Child Safety. This is a very significant announcement that the Bligh government made in relation to our commitment to the NGO sector, and I can advise you that it was very welcomed within that sector.

In relation to the 2009-10 budget, a total of \$65 million will be provided to maintain critical services for dependent clients and to maximise services provided to vulnerable clients. This will increase to \$125 million, as I stated, in 2012-13. The allocation for each departmental program area is still being confirmed. I can advise the committee that today letters have been sent out by the Department of Communities to all of the NGOs advising of this funding. There will be follow-up meetings with them to actually work out what groups receive what funding.

Disability Services is prioritising the allocation of this funding to services working with people who are fully supported by and dependent on their service provision. This includes people with a disability receiving accommodation support, people with a disability who are supported by ageing parent carers and people with a severe mental illness who are supported to remain living in the community. Funding will also be prioritised to services working with people who require assistance and who are vulnerable. This includes people with a disability and people with a mental illness who need assistance to access the community or who are attending day services, people with a disability and their family receiving early intervention support and people with a disability who require advocacy support to ensure that their rights are protected.

To further assist organisations meet the financial challenges ahead, new service improvement measures will be introduced across funded organisations and the department. This is something that the Minister for Child Safety, the minister for communities and I are very supportive of. These measures include a common intake in referral processes across the department, streamlined heads of agreement, making sure that the licensing and quality systems are the same across the whole Department of Communities and moving to outputs for funding. Together these measures will reduce red tape and administrative burdens, improve integration of service provision and enable the maximum amount of resources to focus on meeting client needs.

Mr FOLEY: In answer to question on notice No. 7 you rightly stated that the provision of wheelchairs is handled by the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme. The point of my question was that there is often a shortfall in funding. Sometimes wheelchairs do not last as long. You have mentioned that there is some one-off top-up funding available in certain circumstances to help people where insufficient is provided by the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme. Is there any cap on that top-up funding per individual?

Ms PALASZCZUK: For the purpose of the committee, I will outline a bit more information in relation to the member's original question on notice. It is a very important question because it relates to people with a disability and their need for a wheelchair. A lot of the time people think that this is administered by the department of disability services. It is actually done through the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme which is administered through Queensland Health.

It is a very important service that is provided to people. As the member said, sometimes there can be big gaps in that funding. I have met with people who have said to me that they have had to save up for the difference. What we tend to do is through the Family Support Program we look at it on a case-by-case basis, especially when there is a high need for a child with a disability. As you can appreciate, it is very important for children to get the wheelchairs quickly because they grow very quickly. They need a wheelchair that is suitable for them.

In relation to your specific question about whether or not there is a cap, I point out that there is no cap. What we do is consider it on a case-by-case basis. The majority of applications do go to Queensland Health through the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme which is administered through it. If you want more information in relation to that subsidy scheme, can I suggest that you direct a question in the future to the Minister for Health. You might want to do that.

Mr FOLEY: My second question is along the same lines. I was quite aware that it was through the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme. In terms of the top-up funding that you described is done through your department, how many individuals would have received that funding during the last financial year? What was the dollar value of that top-up funding during the last financial year? I am happy if you want to take that on notice. I realise that that is asking for a bit of detail.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I can give you some information. I will have to take some of that question on notice, but just let me advise the member that specialised aids and equipment can be critical for early intervention responses to families of young children with a disability, as I mentioned. They allow the children to develop independent living skills and reduce the level of care and support that might otherwise be required.

In December 2008 the state government provided \$500,000 in one-off funding through the Early Intervention Initiative to three non-government service providers. They are the Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland, MontroseAccess and the Sunshine Coast Children's Therapy Centre. This enabled them

to purchase aids and equipment for young children with physical disabilities. This initiative supported 671 families. So I think we can give you the family figure, but in relation to the gaps I am happy to provide that for you.

CHAIR: The time allocated for questions by non-government members has expired. I will ask the first question. Page 3-6 of the Service Delivery Statements refers to Youngcare—and I know you made comments in your opening statement about Youngcare—which will be providing accommodation for young people with a disability on the Gold Coast. Will the minister outline to the committee what is occurring state-wide to assist younger people in residential aged care?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. This is very important. As I mentioned earlier, it is one of my key priorities. I am pleased to announce that the Younger People in Residential Aged Care initiative has helped 81 younger people with a disability to find more age-appropriate accommodation. This means that, since the commencement of the program on 1 July 2006, more than 80 people now have better accommodation options than residential aged-care facilities. This includes 36 young people with a disability who have been assisted to move out of residential aged care and a further 45 people with a disability who have been diverted from entering residential aged-care facilities, exceeding the targets set by the Commonwealth government. Another four people are currently being assisted to move from these facilities.

Many young people lived in residential aged-care facilities simply because there were no alternatives. I am committed to working with organisations such as Youngcare and other non-government service providers to deliver a range of accommodation options. Currently there are approximately 170 people with a disability under the age of 50 years living in residential aged-care facilities. The Bligh and Rudd governments have equally invested \$23.9 million over five years, as I mentioned earlier.

As part of the 2009-10 budget commitment, \$13.76 million has been allocated. This will mean extra people will be helped. In fact, we are envisaging an extra 20 people will be moved out of residential aged-care facilities, or diverted from entering them, over the next financial year, which is fantastic news, and which will bring our figures over that 100 mark. This is about giving younger people with a disability a better quality of life and giving them options so that they can remain living in the community.

Yesterday I went out to Youngcare and met with Hazel. She is a 37-year-old woman who lives there with her young son. She told me how grateful she was to be able to live with people her own age. The Bligh government invests \$1.4 million on an ongoing basis to support 16 people living in this Youngcare accommodation. Our 2009 election commitment is for \$3 million over the next three years to provide services for young people with a disability to live in the new accommodation to be built by Youngcare on the Gold Coast. I was advised yesterday that land has been secured at Coomera. So construction should be underway in the very near future.

During my recent visit to St John's Community Care at Gordonvale, the member for Mulgrave and I saw firsthand the facility there—the separate houses, which is fantastic. I met with Lorna, who is a 39-year-old woman. She is actually my age. It was quite amazing to see how her life had turned around. She told me that she had lived in an aged-care facility for four years. No-one spoke to her, because she could not communicate. Now she has the aid of a voice control box and she can communicate, she told me that her life has changed.

Mr CHOI: Good afternoon, Minister. The Service Delivery Statements call for Queensland to be a fairer place. Can we tell the committee how you intend to make Queensland a fairer place for parent carers, particularly when they are getting on in age?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member for Capalaba for his question. I am aware of the concerns that many ageing carers have about who is going to care for their loved one as they get older. Addressing the concerns of older parents caring for a child with a disability is one of my top priorities. Older parents and carers looking after a family member or loved one with a disability now have better access to respite and support to help them cope with their rewarding but often challenging caring role.

Queensland government funding of \$4.2 million will be provided each year over the next three years to provide the respite for older parent carer initiative. This funding enables 22 organisations to provide respite services in 25 locations across Queensland for older parent carers aged 65 and over and for Indigenous carers aged 45 years and over. This funding acknowledges the longstanding contribution of older carers to the lives of those they care for and recognises that for older carers their capacity to continue caring is reduced over time as a result of failing health.

The Bligh government recognises the crucial role that respite services play in strengthening the capacity of families and carers to continue caring for someone with a disability. The Bligh and Rudd governments are committed to working together to assist ageing carers of children with a disability. The federal government has provided \$165 million over four years to provide additional support services

under the Disability Assistance Package, and I am pleased to announce today that this package includes \$10.5 million in federal government investment into 13 organisations to provide up to 80 people with a disability with more accommodation options.

The role of my department was to identify land and accommodation right across the state. We have now located where those houses will be. As the member for Capalaba knows, recently I was down in his electorate and we made a wonderful announcement that, as part of this assistance program, Share Bayside will receive \$800,000 and St Vincent de Paul will receive \$450,000. This funding of over \$1.2 million will provide more flexible accommodation options for people with a disability. We recall how happy the carers were and how happy the people were. It means that younger people with a disability can move into appropriate accommodation and their parents are going to know that they are going to be safe and that they are going to have long, productive and fulfilling lives.

Recently I went up to Toowoomba and met with the member for Toowoomba North, Kerry Shine. We announced \$1 million there. I know that in your electorate we are building accommodation, but in Toowoomba we purchased a bed-and-breakfast called Anden. Everybody who walked through that accommodation said, 'I could live here.' I think that is a really good sign. If you can walk into accommodation and say, 'I could live here,' we are doing the right thing. We are getting it right.

Mr WELLS: As a formality, I refer to page 3-13 of the Service Delivery Statements. A few months ago a new respite care centre was opened in Deception Bay, courtesy of the department. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the department and any of the department's officers who were involved in that process. But it occurred to me to wonder what the state of respite care is across the state of Queensland. Who is providing it and what increases in funding have been delivered recently?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member for his question. The Bligh government recognises the critical role of respite services in keeping families together and strengthening the ability of families to care for their family member with a disability. Sometimes that respite care of one or two hours a week can just make the world of difference to a family. Respite services can be provided in a number of ways, depending on the need. Respite support includes in-home support, centre based respite, community based support, host families respite, vacation programs, emergency respite and other appropriate supports as required.

Over the past nine years we have delivered an unprecedented increase in recurrent funding for non-government respite services, rising from \$2.3 million in 2000-01 to \$28.4 million in 2008-09. This is a dramatic increase. This year's recurrent allocation of \$28.4 million includes an increase of \$6.5 million compared to the previous financial year. This funding was provided to 133 non-government respite providers across the state. That means that more people are getting the service, which is allowing people to remain living in their own homes for a lot longer as well.

I will just give you some recent examples. Forty Townsville families will benefit from an extra \$163,000, which I announced for respite in that region. These services will be delivered by Cootharinga. In Toowoomba I actually opened a new respite centre recently. That is going to be a much needed resource for that area. In September 2008 the Bligh government successfully negotiated the transfer of the Disability Assistance Package from the Commonwealth government. In 2008-09, the first year of this agreement, funding of \$18.7 million was provided for the purposes of providing additional accommodation support, in-home support and respite services. In 2008-09, in combination with the funding from the state budget, we have allocated \$5.5 million to increase general respite services, \$1 million to provide holiday respite programs, \$7 million in individualised packages for young adults, \$6 million for family support, and over \$18 million for new accommodation support arrangements. So I think the member can agree with me that we are making great leaps forward in relation to providing respite services right across Queensland.

CHAIR: Minister, support for families who care for a child with a disability is referred to on page 3-13 of the Service Delivery Statements. Obviously, all of us have many families in our electorates who care for a child with a disability. I ask the minister: would you outline to the committee the range of services available to children with a disability?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member for her question. Disability Services provides and funds a range of early intervention services to children with a disability and their families. For instance, there is the family and early childhood service, which provides multidisciplinary therapy and family support to families who have a child up to six years of age who has or is at risk of having a significant developmental delay. In 2008-09, \$6.6 million was allocated to provide services to approximately 1,600 families to access one-off, short-term and longer term services and supports.

In relation to early intervention for children with a physical disability, last year we allocated \$3 million to enable three non-government service providers to offer the Early Intervention Initiative for children with a physical disability. We assisted 671 children. We have the Autism Early Intervention Initiative, which provides centre based early intervention services for children with autism up to six years of age.

In the budget you may also note in the capital expenditure we have allocations for all-abilities playgrounds. There are about 16 of them that are going to be built right across Queensland. I look forward to opening those over the next 12 months. A new initiative in this year's budget is the \$1.1 million in new funding that will be allocated over two years to pilot self-directed funding for families of children with a disability and young people with a disability. This is a great initiative, because it is about giving people a choice. For them to personally manage their funds is a direction that I think we can go in relation to Disability Services and, by trialling it and if it works well, I am confident that we will be able to roll that out.

I want to briefly talk to you about one initiative. You will recall when we went up to Townsville we met with young family members. We allocated \$90,000 over three years to the organisation in Townsville. The other initiative is that this organisation will work with a child connect officer, who will operate out of the department. For the first time we are going to have a departmental officer trained in early childhood who will be able to go into kindergartens and child-care centres and help families at the point of diagnosis. We want to move away from that situation where families come to us in a crisis situation and ask, 'What can be done?' and, 'Where can I go?' If we are out there helping them—going into their family homes, assisting them where their support organisations are—I think we are going about it the right way. Hopefully, if this initiative in both Ipswich and Townsville goes well then we will look at expanding that. It is something that the federal government is very interested in.

Ms JARRATT: Good afternoon, Minister. Page 3-13 of the Service Delivery Statements talks about investing in Positive Futures reforms. Would the minister explain how the recommendations of Justice Carter's report is part of that investment?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member for Whitsunday for her question. As she would be aware, this is a very important initiative of the government. The Queensland government recognises the importance of the Carter report and responded with the Investing in Positive Futures Initiative through Disability Services. An amount of \$113 million was allocated over four years from 2007-08 to 2009-10 and the estimated budget for this initiative is \$53.13 million.

Justice Carter's 2006 report *Challenging behaviour and disability: a targeted response* looked at current practices and service delivery models for managing people with a disability who have severely challenging behaviour. This is a group of people who may not only have the potential to harm their carers who look after them but also self-harm. It is usually people who need 24-hour support. We want to get it right. We want to put in place positive behaviour plans to make sure that we can reduce the level of challenging behaviour. We have done this in a number of ways. The first way is that we have actually set up a centre of excellence. We are going to lead the way in Australia in relation to this centre, and I visited it recently in Ipswich. The work that they are doing is fantastic. They will bring in people from the NGO sector and people from Disability Services and we are going to train staff so that they know how to deal with clients who exhibit these challenging behaviours.

Under the Investing in Positive Futures Initiative, a support response centre and Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Support was established. The other part of this initiative is that we will be employing over 200 new full-time equivalent professional staff. Once again, it is going to be creating jobs, which the Bligh government is committed to. We are committed to creating jobs and this will be professional staff—an extra 200 people. This is a clear example of another way that we are meeting our commitment to protect and create jobs and help guide Queensland towards a fairer Q2.

Specifically, the teams will assist with the assessment of adults and the development of positive behaviour support plans in cases where the use of restrictive practices has been deemed to be necessary and to develop the least restrictive way to prevent harm. More simply put, the aim is to create more positive supports and to reduce the need for restrictive practices while maximising the safety of clients, carers and others involved. These teams represent the Bligh government's deliverance of new and innovative ideas to support safe and caring communities in Queensland. In this instance, Queensland is leading the way. In fact, we have people from outside of Australia now wanting to come to the centre of excellence to see what we are doing. I think we have the opportunity not just to lead Australia but also to become a world-class centre of excellence.

Mr CHOI: Minister, in responding to a question from the chair of the committee, the member for Brisbane Central, you talked about early intervention. We all know that early intervention is very important to children with autism. Can you advise the committee what is being done to assist children with autism in this regard?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am pleased to hear that the member knows of the importance of early intervention in relation to this initiative. Early intervention strategies are a key priority of mine. In my first week as minister, I met with my federal counterpart, Bill Shorten, to discuss a way forward. Early intervention assists young people with a disability to reach their potential, helps families strengthen their capacity to care and reduces long-term care and support costs. While the exact cause of autism is unknown, I am advised that the benefits of an early intervention approach to children with autistic spectrum disorder are well documented. In 2008-09 the Bligh government committed \$2 million to the Autism Early Intervention Initiative and in 2009-10 we will continue to meet this commitment.

The Autism Early Intervention Initiative was funded in response to the growing need for more early intervention services. The initiative provides centre based early intervention services for children with autism aged under six years. It also provides outreach services to assist families to access appropriate supports. This initiative has provided funding to Autism Queensland and the Autism Early Intervention Outcomes Unit, or AEIOU, to expand and establish new centres throughout Queensland. In 2008-09 approximately 164 children and their families were supported through this Autism Early Intervention Initiative.

In May I visited the AEIOU centre at Moorooka to mark National Autism Awareness Month. This is a very important month as it promotes the need for early intervention and highlights available services. AEIOU delivers its program in five locations: Moorooka, Bray Park, Park Ridge, Townsville and Toowoomba. I have actually been in discussions with AEIOU because in relation to developing our action plan for children with a disability, which I hope to launch at the end of this year, AEIOU is actually looking to expand—and the member for Hinchinbrook might be interested in this—into more regional parts of Queensland, so not just in those major centres. It is doing some preliminary work at the moment talking to the Cerebral Palsy League to see if they can share therapy staff. This is a problem right across Australia at the moment—trying to get therapy staff, which is so important.

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

Mr CRIPPS: Minister, I note your earlier advice that the \$414 million being provided over four years for community sector workers will be spread over several departments. How much will NGOs in the disability support sector get out of this funding when it will be required to be shared with a number of other departments? In the wake of the QIRC decision, does the minister believe that the disability support sector will get enough to remain viable and provide people with disabilities with uninterrupted services?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, I do believe they will get enough. I have been working very closely with the minister for communities and the Minister for Child Safety in relation to this issue. An amount of \$414 million is a significant investment in relation to the workers in the non-government sector. I actually stated earlier that we are prioritising the allocation of this funding to services and working with people who are fully supported by and dependent on their service provision. I went through earlier and listed them for you. They were people such as those who need 24-hour support. In relation to disability services, my preliminary advice is that out of that \$414 million approximately 45 per cent will be going to the disability services sector. I am actually very pleased about that because Disability Services support the most vulnerable people in our community. I think we would all be only too well aware of that.

Mr CRIPPS: Thank you for that answer. Again, with regard to the \$414 million in funding over four years to assist non-government organisations meet the higher cost of wages for their employees and, again, in respect of page 3-3 of the SDS, will the minister advise how many community sector organisations provide support services to people with disabilities and how many of these non-government organisations can expect to receive funding as part of this initiative? Will there be any limits to the amount of funding provided to NGOs according to the number of staff employed by the organisation or the services they provide?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for his question and also his interest in this. As I have stated previously, \$414 million is a significant investment by the Bligh government in relation to valuing the work that the non-government sector does in looking after the needs of the most vulnerable in our community. In relation to non-government organisations, Disability Services provides funding to approximately 301 non-government organisations to provide disability services in Queensland. Can I just say they do wonderful work right across Queensland. In addition, 55 non-government organisations are funded to provide mental health services and 313 non-government organisations are funded to provide Home and Community Care services. Some of these organisations may be receiving funding across all three programs.

The next task we have before us is we are now in the process today of writing to all of the NGOs, and there are also some NGOs in Justice as well. We will be sitting down and working this out according to the NGOs that look after the most vulnerable clients and allocating the funding accordingly. I have been advised by the director-general that final advice on allocation to the NGOs will be made by the end of next month.

Mr CRIPPS: So are there any limits to funding to NGOs according to the number of staff or the services that they provide—the types of services they provide?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The most crucial point here is that it is going to be the vulnerability of the clients, so we need to work that out. As you can appreciate, it is actually quite a large body of work that needs to be done. It cannot just be done overnight. The government has committed to ensuring that this \$414 million goes out to the sector. I am just so pleased that it is going to be across-the-board, that it is going to be for those NGOs in the Child Safety portfolio, the Communities portfolio and also in Disability

Services. The next job will be to sit down and to talk to NGOs as well. We would have some preliminary figures about how many staff work in these NGOs and then the money will be distributed accordingly. I inform the member that QCOSS, the peak body for the sector said—

The Queensland Council of Social Service has welcomed a \$414 million funding boost to wages for community service workers in Tuesday's state budget.

That was from President Karyn Walsh. At a QCOSS breakfast and at a national disability services breakfast that you attended—I remember very well that you were there—you could see that the sector was over the moon that the government had recognised the valuable contribution that their workers make in creating a safer Queensland.

Mr CRIPPS: I can well remember they had a few questions to ask as well about how the money would be appropriated. Minister, I refer to the implementation of the Carter report or the Investing in Positive Futures reforms. In relation to the care of adults with an intellectual and/or cognitive disability who exhibit challenging behaviours as outlined on page 3-5 of the SDS, will the minister provide a total amount of funding that has been allocated to non-government service providers to assist them with meeting the requirements of the legislation passed by the Queensland parliament last year?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sorry, but can you just repeat the last part of your question?

Mr CRIPPS: I sure can. Minister, will you provide the total amount of funding that has been allocated to non-government service providers to assist them with meeting the requirements of the legislation passed by the parliament last year?

Ms PALASZCZUK: In relation to the Positive Futures reforms for adults with an intellectual and/or cognitive disability who exhibit challenging behaviour, we have allocated for 2009-10 the following amounts of money: \$26.8 million to continue the specialist response service across the state and the Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Support that I briefly spoke about; \$21.7 million in 2009-10 to purchase land and construct purpose-built accommodation; \$3.4 million capital in 2009-10—\$16 million over three years—and \$0.8 million recurrent in 2009-10—\$2.2 million over five years—to upgrade infrastructure at Wacol in order to create purpose-designed positive environments.

The member referred to the legislation, the Disability Services Act, in respect of support for NGOs. I am advised that the legislation requires service providers to develop a positive behaviour support plan based on an assessment of the adult. The plan is designed to reduce challenging behaviour and increase positive behaviour. Specialist response service teams work alongside service providers to meet the new requirements under the recently amended Disability Services Act. Specifically, they assist with the assessment of adults and development of positive behaviour support plans in those cases where the use of restrictive practices has been deemed to be necessary and the least restrictive way to prevent harm. They also provide guidance to service providers to monitor and review plans, educational strategies involving service visits, regional roadshows, inductions and professional engagement programs—funding to NGOs for case management and coordination for adults with complex needs and to establish systems for positive behaviour support within their organisation and resourcing for additional clinical services to assist with assessment and planning for priority clients of NGOs.

What can be seen there is that we are actually doing a lot to support the NGOs in relation to the Investing in Positive Futures initiative. I will say to the member, though, that the majority of clients who exhibit challenging behaviours are actually taken care of by the Department of Disability Services. There are, however, some NGOs that look after those people with a disability who exhibit challenging behaviours and we are ensuring that they have the necessary supports and that they understand the legislation and what their requirements are under the legislation.

Mr CRIPPS: You read out a list of things that the support teams or the assessment teams are doing, but in your brief do you have any amounts of funding that are supporting those teams do that job or is there any direct funding to the non-government service providers to assist them meet the requirements of the legislation? That was my question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Funding allocations are given across the spectrum. For example, for the mental health assessment and outreach teams there is a budget allocation of \$600,000. That \$600,000 will be spread over not only our own Disability Services accommodation centres and training for our staff but will also be able to be used for the NGO sector. In addition, the \$1.51 million which goes to the University of Queensland for the Centre of Excellence will not only be used to train our staff who deal with people with challenging behaviours; they are also in the process of training staff from the non-government sector.

Similarly with the specialist response services, \$1 million is allocated, and likewise when we are recruiting specialist staff, they will be working across-the-board. Even though it is not broken down between government and NGOs, there are line items there that will be utilised across the government and the non-government sector.

Mr CRIPPS: Again with reference to the Carter report, the funding budgeted for the implementation of this program on page 39 of the 2008-09 Capital Statement was \$24.3 million. The funding outlined on page 34 of the 2009-10 Capital Statement is \$61 million. Can the minister please advise why the cost of implementing the recommendations of the Carter report has increased by \$36.7 million in 12 months?

Ms PALASZCZUK: You went a little bit too quickly. Can you repeat your question?

Mr CRIPPS: With reference to the Carter report, funding budgeted for the implementation of the program on page 39 of the 2008-09 Capital Statement was \$24.3 million and funding on page 34 of the 2009-10 Capital Statement is \$61 million. Can the minister explain why the costs of implementing the recommendations of the Carter report have increased by \$36.7 million in 12 months?

Ms PALASZCZUK: As I outlined earlier, one of our key commitments in Disability Services is to make sure that the moneys allocated under the reforms are actually implemented. In relation to some of the deferred expenditure, most of it is in relation to infrastructure. As you can appreciate, Disability Services has to acquire land for construction of premises. Not everybody wants accommodation in suburban settings. We have to make sure that the community is happy and we are happy about where the land is going to be allocated. Also, we are going to be building accommodation which is specifically designed not just for people with a disability, so not just with ramps and everything else; the construction has to also take into account the fact that there are support staff based at the accommodation and also extra fittings have to be put in place for people who present with these challenging behaviours.

The designs are quite complex. There was a slight underspend in the previous financial year. In 2008-09 we planned to spend \$13.3 million recurrent funding and \$6.8 million equity. A total of \$21.64 million was expended. This was \$1.52 million more than was allocated. However, this expenditure was necessary to ensure, as I said, appropriate planning and design work was initiated in relation to the next year's capital program and to undertake a recruitment drive of domestic and overseas allied health providers.

Just backing up from what I said earlier, it is a very hard environment at the moment to get the qualified therapy staff that we need. Funding was available from the underspend from the 2007-08 financial year. I can assure the member that we are going to make our commitments in relation to this initiative. It is one of my top priorities as the minister. It is definitely needed. We will ensure that the money is spent.

Mr CRIPPS: My question was not about whether or not there were any delays in expenditure. My question was why has there been a significant increase in the budget for the implementation of this particular report: increasing by \$36.7 million in 12 months—not a delay in the expenditure, an increase in the total estimated expenditure on this one particular program. It may be explained by the fact that the scope or the range of the program has increased, but that is not clearly indicated in the budget papers. What specifically I am asking you is not if there has been any delayed expenditure but why, over one 12-month period, the amount budgeted for this program has increased from \$24.3 million to \$61 million?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think I did actually answer it, but I will repeat it for the member. An additional \$22.3 million in equity funding and \$1.81 million in output funding over four years from 2007-08 has been sourced from the Strategic Asset Management Forward Capital Program to respond to the needs of adults with an intellectual or cognitive disability who exhibit severely challenging behaviours. This funding allows for the further development of a range of responsive accommodation options for adults with an intellectual or cognitive disability by generating an additional 22 beds. These accommodation options will be developed in both regional and metropolitan locations and will enhance the department's capacity to respond to the needs of this group of individuals.

Mr CRIPPS: I refer to the 2009-10 Capital Statement for DSQ on pages 33 and 34 which outlines a capital works budget of \$75.6 million. The capital works budget for DSQ as outlined in the statement for 2008-09 was \$52 million. Of that \$52 million in capital works for 2008-09 will the minister please advise how many projects are yet to be completed and have been carried over into the current budget as part of the \$75.6 million for 2009-10 that I mentioned earlier?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member very much for the question. We do have that information. It will be on hand very shortly. Disability Services invests in capital infrastructure to support service delivery within both government and non-government sectors right across Queensland. Capital infrastructure investment is necessary to enable a wide range of programs and services to be delivered. Through its capital program, Disability Services is able to provide a range of specialised accommodation and new respite centres to support people with a disability, their carers and their families.

In addition, the capital program also enables the provision of new and refurbished office accommodation to support expanded service delivery capacity, particularly relating to the Growing Stronger and Investing in Positive Futures initiatives. I might make the committee aware that our office accommodation in the regions is actually a service delivery point as well. Families actually come into the offices for assessments and also to bring their children in for therapy. These regional offices located across Queensland are service delivery centres.

In relation to the underspend of major capital works in 2008-09, there were approximately 10 projects which experienced some delays. I am happy to outline to you the ones where there were delays. I can actually give you an explanation as to why, if you want, as well. In relation to an innovative house that we are building in Maryborough, \$2.17 million was allocated and we spent \$1.37 million basically because the project was rescope from two dwellings down to one dwelling and the funds from this project were reallocated within the program for a house somewhere else. In relation to tailored accommodation at Hillcrest, the project was completed within budget and there was an underspend. There was \$4.05 million allocated and \$3.83 million was the actual spend. The project actually came in under budget. That is actually a good news story. In relation to funding accommodation, as I said previously—

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

Ms JARRATT: Minister, page 3-2 of the Service Delivery Statement talks about closing the gap in life outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Queenslanders and, indeed, it is a topic that we hear from all levels of government. What initiatives exist for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a disability?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member very much for her question. The Bligh government is committed to ensuring that people from all backgrounds have equitable access to disability services based on relative need for support. It is estimated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are twice as likely to have a disability as people from non-Indigenous backgrounds. The Queensland government is therefore keen to work with the Rudd government under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement to close the gap in terms of the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Improving access to services by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a disability is also a priority reform area under the new National Disability Agreement which commenced on 1 January 2009. I am pleased to highlight some existing initiatives Disability Services has implemented which have a particular focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a disability. The Local Area Coordination Program is a well-established and highly successful program which employs coordinators to help people in rural and remote areas, as I mentioned earlier. It enables people to access information and to build supportive networks and relationships. About 23 per cent of all people currently registered with the program identify as Indigenous. The program also employs 10 coordinators from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds who live and work in their own communities.

Improving community care services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a key priority for both the Bligh and the Rudd governments. The Home and Community Care Program provides basic support and maintenance services to frail aged and younger Indigenous people with a disability and their carers throughout Queensland. This support is provided through 62 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers as well as a broad range of mainstream HACC services. Through the triennial plan additional recurrent funding of \$5.4 million over three years is being allocated specifically to support eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Queensland, including \$1.8 million in 2008-09. The HACC Program also funds four Indigenous project officers through Queensland Health to provide culturally appropriate support to Indigenous HACC service providers in Queensland.

Communication can also be a barrier to accessing information and services. To address this, Disability Services has funded Deaf Services Queensland to provide translating and interpreting services. The target group includes people with a disability who are from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. Improving the skills of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous staff is also important to improving access to services. Our Skilling Plan skills development scholarships target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability service workers in the non-government sector. In 2008-09, 55 scholarships were awarded for accredited training against the disability work qualifications and relevant professional development.

Ms JARRATT: I refer to the reference to promoting positive community outcomes on page 3-2 of the Service Delivery Statement and I ask if you would explain to the committee how Disability Services delivers services to Queenslanders with a disability who live in rural and remote locations across the state?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for her question. We are committed to supporting Queenslanders with a disability, including those who live in rural and remote areas. Just last month I had the pleasure of visiting Rockhampton, where I announced \$200,000 for a new and innovative pilot service for people with a disability living in the Rockhampton and Capricorn Coast area. It is called a 'tuck-in service'. It is an after-hours attendant service which will operate between 6 pm and 6 am, providing clients with support to carry out regular light-out tasks. For example, that might mean helping the person get changed for bed or assisting with medication that the person may need to take. I think the benefit of it is the person coming into the house of the person with a disability and making sure that everything is okay, making sure that there are no problems. We anticipate that this project will go

extremely well. Hopefully it, too, will be able to be expanded to other parts of Queensland. This new service will mean that people can remain in their own home in their own community and they can also maintain their independence.

The Local Area Coordination Program, which I spoke about earlier, is another key initiative. We have 50 local area coordinators located in 35 rural and remote communities to assist people to build support networks and relationships and work with communities to include people with disabilities in local services. The budget for 2008-09 was \$6.1 million and it enabled 1,180 people to get direct access support. The funding also allowed information and referral services to be provided to an additional 760 people in regional and rural communities. The Local Area Coordination Program also provides significant support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability, as I mentioned previously.

We have Family and Early Childhood Services teams located in regional centres across the state to provide outreach services to adjacent rural areas. These teams support families with a young child with significant developmental delays by providing specialist input to promote the child's development. Early intervention is one of my key priorities, as I mentioned earlier. We also continue to fund respite and accommodation throughout Queensland. In 2008-09 there were 368 NGO service providers delivering accommodation support to more than 2,700 people with a disability living outside the Greater Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast regions.

CHAIR: Minister, how does Disability Services assist in the Bligh government's Q2 strategic direction of creating more inclusive, active and safe communities, as indicated on page 3-2 of the Service Delivery Statement, for people with a disability across all state government departments?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member for this very important question. Disability Services has a strong commitment to the Bligh government's Q2 strategic direction of creating more inclusive, active and safe communities for people with a disability. We are committed to ensuring that people with a disability have the same opportunity for civil, political, cultural, legal, social and economic participation as everyone else in our community. It gives me great pleasure to table the first annual progress report on the Disability Service Plan. The plans are a key instrument for promoting social inclusion and quality of life for people with a disability by aiming for the same level of access to government services and to government employment opportunities expected by all Queenslanders.

CHAIR: Minister, the standing order provides that you may table a document with leave of the committee. Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Disability Services has taken a leadership role in the introduction of the Disability Service Plan and coordination of a whole-of-government approach to strengthening the delivery of government services to people with a disability. In the Disability Service Plan, every Queensland government department has identified strategies to increase the responsiveness of its services to people with a disability. A coordinated whole-of-government response enables government departments to share ideas and build on achievements. I would like to go through and mention a few for the benefit of the committee.

For example, we have the provision of Auslan in school for students who require or request access to schooling via signed communication. The Wongabel State Forest walking tracks are designed for people with vision impairment. We have more accessible taxis for Queensland rural and regional communities. We have the adoption of wayfinding guidelines to assist people with a disability to navigate unfamiliar environments. We have specific child safety protocols for notifications about children with a disability. There has been the construction of a sensory walk and an Auslan interpreter walk in the Roma Street Parkland. We have active recreation centres which consider the needs of people with a disability. We have also introduced the *Accessible Queensland* guide to provide information on the supported services available across Queensland's destinations.

This first year of implementation provides important groundwork for the progressive realisation of the Queensland government's vision for ensuring that people with a disability have the same opportunity for social and economic participation as any other Queenslanders. The plans help to ensure that government policies for people with a disability are embedded into the business of each government agency.

Mr CHOI: Minister, I had the pleasure of representing you a few weeks ago at the launch of an all abilities playground planning and consultation process at the Capalaba Regional Park. I have to confess that I knew very little about the all abilities playground initiative but I came away deeply impressed. Not wanting to keep this wonderful initiative to myself, I would like you to share with my fellow committee members how that can contribute to not only a healthier Queensland but also a fairer one.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for the question. I am very pleased that he has an all abilities playground that is under construction in his local area. The Bligh government has invested \$5 million into developing 16 all abilities playgrounds right across the state. The all abilities playground project is a collaborative project between local councils and Disability Services. The all abilities playgrounds provide families with play areas that can be enjoyed by children of all ages and

abilities. They are safe places where children of all ages and abilities can experience fun and challenging play together alongside their friends and family members. Essentially it is promoting social inclusion. It means that children can play together and interact with families. It unifies everybody and it is great for our society as a whole.

During a recent visit to Edmonton with the member for Mulgrave I was impressed by how the design was being developed with the involvement of children and families within the local community. That is what we are doing: we are consulting with the local community to see what they actually want in these playgrounds. In Edmonton the playground will cover about 3,000 square metres of the botanical gardens precinct. In April the construction phase of a \$370,000 state-of-the-art all abilities playground commenced in Texas.

The development by Disability Services of the project's unique design framework encourages the participation of playground users. From planning through to construction, opportunities for community involvement are promoted as a way of creating a play environment that meets the needs of local children with and without disabilities and their families and removes past barriers that are found to be existing in playgrounds. Essentially in the past the situation would be that children with a disability would simply not be able to play in certain playgrounds because the equipment was not accessible to them. The response that we are getting from families with children with a disability is that they are just over the moon that the government is actually committed to this project. What is good to see is that the councils are partnering with the government in relation to this, and that is happening right across the state.

Children and families with and without disabilities, schools, non-government organisations, early childhood programs and allied health specialists such as occupational therapists and physiotherapists have participated in creating the design of their local all abilities playground. The most important thing is that these playgrounds can be enjoyed by all children. This was evident at the opening of the newly funded all abilities playground in Mount Isa just recently during the Q150 celebrations in June.

Mr WELLS: I refer the honourable minister to page 3-27 of the Service Delivery Statement, which relates to Meals on Wheels. In a short period of time I am going to be attending a meeting of the Deception Bay Meals on Wheels group. I would not want to miss the opportunity of mentioning the outstanding work they do in the community that I represent. That brings me to the question. How many Meals on Wheels do we subsidise across the state? How many meals are provided across the regions and how does this work in rural and remote areas?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for the question. I think most members of parliament would have at least one, if not more than one, Meals on Wheels operator in their community. They do wonderful work for the community.

Mr WELLS: Hear, hear!

Ms PALASZCZUK: The budget for Meals on Wheels for 2009-10 is \$5.2 million, with subsidies paid by the state and Commonwealth governments to more than 140 service providers across the state. That is a significant number of service providers. Meals on Wheels in Queensland has grown from humble origins, being started in the 1950s by two Ipswich women in a backyard gardener's cottage. It was then and it remains now volunteers who are the heart and soul of the service. Volunteer staff prepare and deliver ready-to-eat meals to frail aged and younger people with disabilities in towns and cities across Queensland.

To assist service providers in this tough economic climate, I am pleased to report that in 2008-09 the meal subsidy was increased to \$2.40 per meal. These subsidies supported the delivery of around 2.3 million ready-to-eat meals to clients in their own homes. Last year subsidies totalling \$5.2 million were paid to 147 Meals on Wheels service providers across Queensland. Across Queensland meal subsidy payments included more than \$212,000 to eight Meals on Wheels providers in Central Queensland for more than 88,000 meals; more than \$36,000 to five providers in the central west for more than 15,000 meals, including to clients living in Aramac, Alpha and Barcardine; more than \$155,000 to four providers in the Mackay area for the delivery of around 65,000 meals, including to eligible clients in Proserpine; nearly \$333,000 to 10 providers in northern Queensland for more than 138,000 meals, including to areas such as Julia Creek, Hughenden and Charters Towers; and nearly \$219,000 to 14 providers in the peninsula area for more than 91,000 meals to places such as Babinda, Ravenshoe, Herberton and Yarrabah.

In addition, in South-East Queensland 28 Meals on Wheels providers in north and south Brisbane received \$1.7 million in subsidies for the delivery of 709,000 meals. So, as you can see and as I am quite sure the committee is aware, this is a great program. It is good to see that both the Bligh and Rudd governments are committed to subsidising these meals which enable the elderly to remain living in their own home for a lot longer. In addition, a grant of \$500,000 was also made to the Queensland Meals on Wheels Services Association.

CHAIR: Minister, page 3-6 of the SDS mentions services for Indigenous Queenslanders, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and also people who are at risk of homelessness. How are these services delivered and can the minister provide examples?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for her question and the opportunity to talk more about some of the ways the Bligh government is delivering fair and more caring communities to these people. In the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we are investing an extra \$5.4 million over three years to fund Home and Community Care services specifically targeted to the needs of Indigenous communities. Last year extra services were delivered in Indigenous communities across Queensland at a cost of \$1.85 million. We are also supporting the 62 Indigenous service providers through the employment of four Indigenous project officers. In 2008-09 these service providers received funds totalling \$15.13 million. Of course Indigenous people can and do access mainstream HACC services that operate throughout the state.

Another priority is to improve access to Home and Community Care services for eligible people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds including carers. Queensland is home to more than 200 cultures and 220 languages. As these figures grow, so does the challenge for community care providers, particularly in aged care. This challenge is made greater by the fact that Queensland has one of the most geographically diverse populations in Australia and has one of the largest proportions of aged people from diverse ethnic backgrounds living outside of metropolitan areas.

In April this year, the federal Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot, and I announced funding of \$1.1 million to Carers Queensland to establish seven new regional multicultural advisory services across Queensland. Ongoing funding of \$820,000 per year and a one-off capital grant of \$240,000 for 2008-09 were allocated. Educating HACC service providers and equipping them with tools to most appropriately support clients from diverse backgrounds is an important part of this initiative. The seven new services will be established in Central Queensland, the Darling Downs south-west area, Northern Queensland, the peninsula, north and south Brisbane and West Moreton. The new multicultural advisory services are on top of the wide range of existing HACC services that specifically assist eligible people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, with funding that totalled \$11 million in 2008-09.

In line with the Prime Minister's priority to tackle homelessness, the Bligh government has increased its efforts to extend services for people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. Outreach services go onto the streets and into hostels and boarding houses where people are living to ensure that homelessness is not a barrier to accessing services. These services help alleviate the problems of homelessness and assist specialist homelessness service providers.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for questions by government members has expired. The next two blocks will be for 10 minutes each.

Mr CRIPPS: Following up on my earlier question regarding the costs associated with implementing the Carter report, will the minister please provide an itemised breakdown of all expenditure to date in relation to the implementation of the Carter report? If that is not available directly, I am happy for the minister to take that on notice.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member for the question. I am happy to provide you with the allocation for 2008-09 which will assist initially. Do you want it to go back further?

Mr CRIPPS: I want an itemised allocation.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, I can give you an itemised allocation. It goes as follows: for the positive behaviour support system, we budgeted \$10.09 million and we spent \$11 million, as I explained earlier; the Mental Health Assessment and Outreach Team, \$600,000; the Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Support, \$1.72 million; recruitment strategies, \$900,000, and that was in relation to, as I mentioned earlier, the recruitment of specialist staff; and the refurbishment of units at Wacol, office fit-outs and design fees, \$6.18 million, and we actually increased the expenditure there to \$7.53 million, as I mentioned earlier. That is actually for 16 beds so that is the infrastructure that is going to be provided there. That is the breakdown for 2008-09. The breakdown for 2009-10 is here in the SDS at 3-5, which is the \$26.8 million recurrent to continue the Specialist Response Service, \$21.7 million to purchase land and construct and the \$3.4 million to upgrade. Are you happy with that?

Mr CRIPPS: Yes. This year's SDS is not the problem; it was just the expenditure to date that I was looking for. Thanks very much.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I just add that the total there for the budget for 2008-09 for Investing in Positive Futures was \$20.12 million and we spent \$21.64 million, so we spent a bit more than was initially allocated. Our budget for 2009-10 is \$53.1 million. So you can see that, as we are rolling out the program, we are getting the designs for the units done and then the construction will start so we will need more money. We are definitely committed to making sure that we expend all money in relation to this program.

Mr CRIPPS: On page 39 of the 2008-09 Capital Statement, a grouped allocation of \$12.8 million was provided for all abilities playgrounds, the Younger People in Residential Aged Care Initiative, Strengthening NGOs and cluster housing. The answer provided to question on notice 396 advises that \$9.95 million was spent on the programs within this grouped allocation. This indicates there was an underspending within this grouped allocation to the tune of \$2.85 million. Will the minister advise which project or projects missed out on the budgeted funding which was not spent?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am well aware of your question on notice—and we do have the answer for this—because once you asked this question I went and double-checked it myself. In 2008-09, you mentioned the amount expended for construction of eight all abilities playgrounds was \$1.41 million. The commencement dates and progress for the development of the all abilities playgrounds were delayed due to the longer time taken by most of the local governments with planning and design, as they have embraced the participatory approach. As I mentioned earlier, basically they are getting the community involved and there will be some delays with the time it takes to get the results back from that community consultation. The floods in January and February also impacted on some of the schedules. As a result, the main component of the budget for capital grants for those projects will be spent in this financial year, 2009-10.

In relation to your second one—the Younger People in Residential Aged Care Initiative—the money expended there was \$1.62 million, and we had initially allocated \$3.39 million. So \$1.62 million was provided to non-government organisations to develop housing options and \$570,000 was for the purchase of essential aids and equipment. The remaining \$1.2 million was not expended in 2008-09 due to: delays experienced by the Brisbane Housing Company in finalising the tender for construction of a six-unit complex in my electorate of Inala—so I am very happy that I will have one of these houses in my electorate; and can I add that the former minister made that announcement of the land that was found there—delays in negotiating the proposal for extensive renovation of a property on the Sunshine Coast, and the NGOs requiring longer periods of time to finalise prescription and trials of specialised aids and equipment for individuals.

In relation to the capital grants of \$1.2 million expended through the Strengthening NGOs Asset Acquisition/Replacement Initiative, in 2008-09 capital grants of \$1.7 million from the total budget of \$6.4 million were paid to service providers through this initiative. The aim of the initiative is to increase the capacity to provide day services for people with a disability across the state. Funding for capital works is paid according to negotiated milestone achievements. The remainder are in progress or have experienced delays as follows—

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Time for the answer has finished.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy to keep going if I am granted time.

CHAIR: Would the member for Hinchinbrook consent to an extension of time?

Mr CRIPPS: I have a couple more questions to ask.

CHAIR: I gather that is a no from the member for Hinchinbrook.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am really happy to finish your answer.

Mr CRIPPS: Go ahead, Minister.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The delays were as follows: the six service providers have received part payment of their allocation based on the achievements, five service providers are currently in negotiation with Disability Services to finalise their capital allocations and two service providers have not yet commenced due to circumstances that resulted in them having to seek alternative options.

Your final one is the Purpose Designed Housing and \$5.69 million. Capital funding of \$3.84 million has been expended for the development of six purpose designed houses in the Brisbane suburb of Hillcrest. An amount of \$620,000 has been allocated for the 2009-10 financial year to provide for the final payment to the contractor. In 2008-09, \$4 million was allocated for Purpose Designed Housing to provide long-term, affordable accommodation for people with a disability in the Wide Bay-Burnett area. The remaining \$2.15 million was not expended in 2008-09 because, first, the contracts to purchase two additional properties specified settlement dates in July and August 2009, and these two properties will be purchased for approximately \$1 million; and, second, a tender process was required to select contractors to carry out modifications and minor upgrades which are required at all six properties. This work will be completed by October 2009 at a cost of up to \$1.15 million. I think I have given you a quite detailed explanation as to why some of the funds were not expended.

Mr CRIPPS: Minister, in relation to carers, page 3-14 of the SDS advises that the government has established the Office for Carers to support the government's focus on recognising the needs and concerns of carers. One of those concerns undoubtedly relates to the overwhelming minority of cases where some carers have actually mistreated the people they are caring for. Will the minister please advise the number of reported assaults on people with disabilities by registered care givers in the last 12 months? What strategies does the department have to minimise the instances of this treatment?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think there are probably two separate questions. The Office for Carers does not deal with allegations—I think your second one was allegations of abuse?

Mr CRIPPS: I just noted that you have established the Office for Carers to support the government's focus on recognising the needs and concerns of carers, which was outlined on page 3-14 of the SDS. But in the overwhelming minority of cases, there are problems associated with carers actually mistreating people who are in their care. My question relates to the number of reported assaults by registered carers against people with disabilities in the last 12 months and the strategies that your department is pursuing to minimise these.

Ms PALASZCZUK: In relation to complaints, if there are any allegations of abuse or mistreatment, I would encourage people to put in a complaint. The department has a very comprehensive set of complaint procedures. Should an allegation of abuse or neglect be made, it is Disability Services's procedure to immediately investigate the allegation, report back to the director-general and make recommendations of action to minimise the impact of the incident. These procedures also act against the recurrence of abuse, neglect and exploitation incidents. The member is probably aware that in more serious cases allegations are referred to the Crime and Misconduct Commission or the Queensland Police Service.

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

Ms JARRATT: Minister, I refer you to page 3-14 of the SDS and ask if you would report on the cost and status of the Community Care Access Point. Is this concept being further developed?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member for her question. Helping the frail aged and younger people with a disability to remain in their homes is at the core of the Home and Community Care Program. Last year around 160,000 Queenslanders were assisted by a HACC funded service. From having a grab rail installed in their house, a meal delivered, help from people who visit and do cleaning, a visit from a nurse or allied health therapist or assistance with transport, HACC is about giving Queenslanders an opportunity to maintain their independence. Now the state and federal governments are working together to make these vital and practical supports even easier to access with the Community Care Access Point demonstration project currently operating in Rockhampton.

Total funding to establish and operate the access point in 2008-09 was \$307,000 and I recently approved further funding totalling \$332,000 to continue the project in 2009-10. Disability Services has contracted three organisations to operate the access point: Ozcare, Suncare and Queensland Health Aged Care Services. The access point is a one-stop shop to link people to the services they need by telephoning a free call 1800 number. This makes it easier for people to find out what services are available locally to help them live independently at home and in their community.

Importantly, the access point also assesses people's eligibility for the basic support and maintenance services available through the Home and Community Care Program. People who are assessed as HACC eligible are then supported to make an informed choice about which service providers will best meet their needs. This project has been operational since May 2008, initially servicing the Rockhampton Regional Council area and surrounds. The catchment area has now expanded twice to include the communities of Gladstone, Banana and Central Highlands in January 2009, and then to the Wide Bay region in March 2009. Since May 2008, there have been over 1,000 calls. People who are not eligible are referred by the access point to other appropriate services or provided with further information where possible.

The Rockhampton access point's success is currently being considered as part of a national evaluation project which is also considering the effectiveness of several other access point demonstration projects that have been established nationwide to trial new approaches to access and assessment for community care services. While the models and approaches may differ, they all share the aim of making it easier for people to inquire about and be assessed for HACC and other community care services. We are committed to the statewide implementation of the access point system.

Mr CHOI: Page 3-6 of the SDS indicates the recurrent amount to be spent on services for people with a mental illness living in our community. Will any of these funds go to developing employment opportunities for people with mental illness?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. People living with mental illness can experience many challenges and barriers in finding meaningful and rewarding work where their contribution is appreciated. The Bligh government is committed to supporting people with a mental illness access meaningful employment in a supportive environment.

The 2009-10 budget includes \$26.1 million in recurrent funding for non-clinical mental health services. As part of this funding, \$2 million has been allocated to assist with the development of social firms to set up community based businesses to employ people with a mental illness. This includes \$1 million non-recurrent funding which will be provided in 2009-10 for the establishment of social firms to employ people living with mental illness. A further \$1 million in non-recurrent funding will be provided in 2010-11 as start-up funds to develop up to five new social firms across Queensland.

Social firms operate as not-for-profit enterprises with the aim of providing opportunities for people with a mental illness to work in a safe and supportive environment which assists their personal journey of recovery. The Bligh government is committed to funding new and innovative ways to create jobs for Queenslanders, including those with a mental health condition. People with mental illness often struggle to gain and maintain employment, and this difficulty is only magnified in these tough economic times.

The \$2 million non-recurrent funding will establish five social firms across the state. The social firms developed through this initiative will create flexible employment opportunities for people with mental illness in a supportive work environment that pays fair wages to all employees. In Queensland

there are a number of social firms already operating. One example is the Nundah Co-op, which was established in 1999. These businesses have been developed through partnerships with Social Ventures Australia, which has established social enterprise hubs in Brisbane, Logan and Ipswich.

Social Ventures Australia has developed a unique range of skills and expertise based on experience from the United Kingdom and countries where social firms have become a very successful employment option for people with a mental illness. Already a number of workshops have been held at the social enterprise hubs to provide information and practical advice for groups interested in developing a social firm. These events have provided opportunities for mental health consumers and non-government agencies to network and share ideas about potential projects in their communities.

In 2008-09 Disability Services received positive responses from non-government organisations and consumer groups that were in the process of developing business options and will apply for funding through this initiative. The Queensland Plan for Mental Health 2007-2017 outlines the government's commitment to build a comprehensive mental health system based on the recovery approach. The plan focuses on building stronger partnerships with consumers, families and the non-government sector. Disability Services has been working with community organisations and people with a mental illness to develop a range of innovative responses that promote recovery and assist people to be at the centre of decision making.

Mr WELLS: My question is further to the question asked by the honourable member for Capalaba relating to mental illness. For the record, it is page 3-6 of the SDS. I note that the honourable minister earlier referred to her philosophy and commitment to early intervention. I wondered how that philosophy applied in the area of mental illness.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for his question. My philosophy on early intervention for children with a disability also applies in relation to early intervention for people with a mental illness. The Bligh government's 2009-10 state budget delivers on this commitment with \$6.5 million in new funding over three years to pilot a brand-new initiative called Young People in Residential Community Care. This exciting new initiative will provide a safe and supportive community based focus on early intervention for young people aged between 15 and 25 years who are experiencing the early signs and symptoms of mental illness.

To give you an indication of the potential results early intervention can produce in mental health, research indicates that 75 per cent of people suffering from a mental illness have experienced the symptoms of the illness by the age of 24. In total, more than 161,000 Queensland children and adolescents aged zero to 17 years, or 15.5 per cent of this population, will experience mental health illness at some stage in their early life.

The new Young People in Residential Community Care project will include outreach support in the community for up to three months following an individual stay in the residence. The model will pilot two residential sites—one in regional Queensland and one in Brisbane. Some \$2.2 million is allocated to the initiative in 2009-10. This funding will support up to 100 young people at each site over the period of a year. A maximum of four young people will reside in each residence at any one time. I would also like to note that the Queensland Alliance, the peak body for the community mental health sector, is very supportive of this new initiative.

The accommodation will provide a non-threatening but supportive and safe alternative to in-patient hospital services, thus providing young people in crisis with an appropriate response to their needs. The focus will be on supporting wellness by addressing the individual's social and emotional needs. The individualised approach will be supported by an increased education of self-awareness and mental health to give individuals the tools they need for the future. For the same reasons, the program will engage the family, friends and key supports of a young person to ensure they have the support systems around them for their long-term health. As well as for the individual, a long-term benefit is that through educating their family and friends we are taking an important step towards educating the whole community about mental illness.

A key to the program is encouraging young people to remain active in their community, both socially and economically, which allows them to maintain a sense of independence. The initiative will be managed and procured by Disability Services and implemented in collaboration with the Queensland Alliance as the peak body for the mental health NGO sector in Queensland.

CHAIR: That brings the committee's examination of estimates for Disability Services to a close. I thank those officers who were involved in that section of the portfolio. The committee will adjourn for a short break and then commence examining the estimates for Multicultural Affairs.

Proceedings suspended from 2.51 pm to 3.20 pm

CHAIR: The Estimates Committee D hearing is now resumed. The committee will now examine estimates for Multicultural Affairs, but before we do I believe the minister wants to give a quick response to one of the questions asked by the member for Hinchinbrook.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to ask permission to provide a response to an earlier question.

CHAIR: Yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The member for Hinchinbrook asked for a breakdown of satisfaction ratings by region for the four service categories as outlined in the SDS. I would like to refer to the earlier question that the member referred to. The 2009 survey was completed by 2,174 people out of a total service population of nearly 21,000 service users. This equates to approximately 10 per cent of the total user service population, which is a satisfactory statistical sample. It is important to note that the purpose of a survey is to gauge the satisfaction of service users at a whole-of-state level only, and as a result the sampling process used to determine the survey population was not designed to collect data at a regional level. The survey is conducted by an independent contractor, and to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of respondents no identifying information is collected by or provided to the department, including data by region. This means that we are unable to provide the requested satisfaction rates by region.

CHAIR: I again remind members of the committee and the minister that under standing orders the time limit for questions is one minute and answers are to be no longer than three minutes. A single chime will give a 15-second warning and a double chime will sound at the end of each time limit. An extension of time may be given with the consent of the questioner. A double chime will sound two minutes after an extension of time has been given.

To assist Hansard, officers are asked to provide their names and positions prior to responding to a question referred to them by the minister. In the event that those attending today are not aware, the committee's proceedings are lawful proceedings and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the Queensland parliament. Members of the public are welcome to observe the proceedings but may not participate in the proceedings. In that regard, and in accordance with standing order 206, any person admitted to this hearing may be excluded by order of the committee or at my discretion as the chair. I also remind members, witnesses and members of the public that no food or drink is permitted to be consumed in the Legislative Council chamber. Once again, I ask that all mobile phones and pagers be now switched off. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Mr CRIPPS: Minister, I refer to page 3-7 of the SDS which advises that \$2 million will be spent each year for three years as part of the Local Area Multicultural Partnership and Community Action for a Multicultural Society programs. During debate on the Appropriation Bill, I endorsed these funding initiatives. As a representative of a culturally diverse electorate, I think it is appropriate for these efforts to be pursued at a local level. Having said that, will the minister please outline how the recipients of these grants are required to acquit the public money they receive to ensure there is transparency and accountability in the delivery of these programs?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. This is a very important commitment that the Bligh government is delivering on, especially because the LAMP and CAMS project workers, especially the LAMP project workers, work with the councils and the local communities right across the state. We have allocated \$2 million in 2009-10 to implement the LAMP programs. In fact, I was very fortunate earlier in the year when I was appointed as minister to meet with the LAMP and CAMS workers to discuss ideas that they have about improving links with various groups in their local community.

For 2008-09 we allocated \$1 million to this program, and it enabled workers to be employed in 14 local councils across the state. Another key factor is that these project workers are also supported by a coordinator from the Local Government Association of Queensland. That is something that the LGAQ has welcomed. One of the first things I did as minister was to continue the support of that work of the LGAQ.

In relation to what these workers do, of course we want to ensure that they are delivering. So the LGAQ coordinator, I am advised, would get the information in from the different LAMP workers across the state. For any normal funding agreements that are made between the state government and local councils, there are normal processes that must be met, which means that reports must be provided to make sure that the funds are expended in the normal course of transactions.

Mr CRIPPS: I refer to page 3-18 of the SDS and the \$9.2 million of expenditure on Multicultural Affairs. Again, during debate on the Appropriation Bill, I made the observation that language is often the biggest single barrier facing migrants and refugees. Without the ability to communicate, simple day-to-day tasks can become really difficult for people. Will the minister advise how much was spent by the office of multicultural affairs in 2008-09 on the delivery of English tutoring programs in the multicultural communities of Queensland and how much is allocated for the delivery of these English tutoring programs for 2009-10?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for his question. I can advise that we gave some information to you to a question on notice that you asked of me earlier in May. We recognise that this is very important to make sure that people have access to translation and interpreter services. Your question, though, was specifically in relation to English language classes; is that correct?

Mr CRIPPS: That is correct, Minister.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The main body that conducts the English language classes is TAFE Queensland. In my local electorate, for example, at the local Inala TAFE it is predominantly for migrants and refugees to come there and learn English. It is very popular, and people come from all around Brisbane. These services are provided throughout Queensland.

I note that some of the NGOs also do tremendous work when it comes to improving the ability for conversation. Recently I met with St Vincent de Paul. It runs this program where it goes out into people's homes who have newly arrived from overseas and it helps with the daily tasks of shopping, but it also sits down with the family once a week to teach the family basic English, which is so important for when people arrive from overseas.

In 2008-09 Multicultural Affairs Queensland provided \$150,000 to the Department of Education and Training to support the operation of after-hours ethnic schools in Queensland. Through the ethnic schools program, after-hours tuition classes are delivered to community members in diverse community languages. Twenty-eight after-hours ethnic school organisations have been funded to deliver language classes to over 3,800 students in 2008-09. In relation to those TAFE courses, I am more than happy to get some further information from the relevant minister.

Mr CRIPPS: Minister, page 3-16 of the SDS outlines some of the achievements of the department during 2008-09 in respect of multicultural affairs. Notwithstanding these efforts, a recent study by the University of Western Sydney found that 40 per cent of Australians think cultural differences pose a threat to societal harmony. Will the minister please advise how much the department has spent in the last 12 months specifically on programs to change community attitudes to cultural diversity? Is there any effort being put into assessing the effectiveness of existing programs in this regard? I am happy to table the article indicating the research done by the University of Western Sydney.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member for the question. I would be very interested to have a look at the report that the member referred to earlier. I note that you asked me something very similar to this recently. It related to the breakdown of administrative costs. I think your question related more to our Multicultural Assistance Program.

The Multicultural Assistance Program is basically what we were talking about previously in relation to LAMP and CAMS. People are employed to work with these groups and councils to ensure that any issues they identify on a local or regional level they can work to overcome with those different groups. Our expenditure for this in 2009-10 is \$3.175 million.

In relation to a breakdown of funding for the Multicultural Assistance Program it is as follows: \$1 million for the Local Area Multicultural Partnership program; \$1.1 million for the Community Action for a Multicultural Society program; \$730,000 for the annual grants round; \$105,000 for the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland as the peak agency; \$30,000 for the Australian South Sea Islander Scholarship program; \$150,000, as mentioned previously, for after-hours ethnic schools; \$80,000 for the Commonwealth-state partnership on language services; and \$10,000 to contribute to Commonwealth-state research initiatives.

The Bligh government is committed to continuing our commitment to the Queensland Roars Again Racism campaign. It advances positive community relations in Queensland. This very successful event was held last Sunday. I pass on my personal congratulations to the staff of Multicultural Affairs Queensland who did an excellent job in organising that event. Some 31,000 people attended on that day. Through partnerships like this, positive messaging and community engagement activities the strategy aims to ensure that our society respects and values our cultural diversity.

Mr CRIPPS: On page 1-239 of the 2008-09 SDS \$1 million was allocated to raise the profile of multiculturalism in the Queensland community, which I assume promoted the benefits of multiculturalism in positive terms and to an extent may have addressed some of the negative attitudes that I spoke of earlier and as outlined in the research by the University of Western Sydney. Will the minister please advise how these funds were spent?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The \$1 million in 2008-09, where are you getting that from?

Mr CRIPPS: It is on page 1-239 of the 2008-09 SDS. A million dollars was allocated to raising the profile of multiculturalism in Queensland. I was wondering how those funds were spent.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am advised that that \$1 million is the allocation I mentioned in relation to LAMP and CAMS workers. I will make a few comments in relation to multicultural affairs policy in Queensland. I think that as a new minister it is important for me to review our existing policy. I have been

out there meeting with various groups right across Queensland. The member for Hinchinbrook may recall that both the member for Brisbane Central and I even visited Ingham recently to attend the Italian festival up there. I am trying to get out to as many places as possible.

I think it is time that we actually reviewed our multicultural affairs policy. What people are saying to me is that we have a carers recognition act in this state so maybe we should look at having a multicultural affairs act to recognise the diversity that we have in our community. I think that would say to Queenslanders who are from different parts of the world that we recognise their value and contribution to the community, we recognise their cultural diversity and respect it and that we will not tolerate any form of racism.

I look forward in the coming months to working with my ministerial council as well as other groups right across Queensland to bring about a very good multicultural affairs policy and hopefully even a new multicultural affairs act.

Mr CRIPPS: I can assure you that your announcement of your department's commitment to fund in part the Australian-Italian Festival next year was very much welcomed by the organising committee. I thought that I would mention that again.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is \$15,000 very well spent.

Mr CRIPPS: Hear, hear! With reference to the \$9.2 million budgeted for the Office of Multicultural Affairs as outlined on page 3-18 of the SDS, will the minister please advise how much of this expenditure goes towards the payment of staff wages and the running of the office responsible for delivering multicultural services in Queensland? How much funding goes towards the delivery of multicultural programs to the community?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. As you can see, the budget for Multicultural Affairs Queensland has increased for the coming financial year. In relation to the \$9.267 million in expenditure for 2009-10, I can advise that \$5.03 million will go in grants and subsidies primarily relating to Community Action for a Multicultural Society, the Local Area Multicultural Partnership and the annual grants round.

I advise the committee that the grants round for 2009-10 will be opening over the next two weeks. That is \$700,000 worth of grants. The member had better get his Italian festival to put an application in because the applications will close in two months time. The \$700,000 in grants is a fantastic initiative. The Bligh government is committed to ensuring that this funding round continues.

We also have funding for the Commonwealth-state partnership on language services, funding for the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland—as mentioned previously—the Australian South Sea Islander Scholarship program, the after-hours ethnic schools and contributions to Commonwealth-state research initiatives and various other programs. That totals \$5.03 million. The remaining \$4.237 million accounts for employee expenses, supplies and services—including, for example, the Queensland Multicultural Festival which is coming up again in October; I am very much looking forward to attending that—and the Queensland Roars against Racism campaign. I mention that that was held last Sunday. The Glasgow Celtics beat the Brisbane Roar. I am quite sure that if they come out in the future our team will come back. There is also funding for community information and awareness and depreciation.

The point I wanted to make here is that in 2008-09 our expenditure was \$7.263 million and in 2009-10 our funding is \$9.267 million. This does not account for the whole-of-government approach to multicultural affairs. This is primarily the multicultural affairs department which is under my portfolio.

Mr CRIPPS: In your answer to question on notice No. 431 this year you stated that 218 communities staff and 205 disability staff had participated in cross-cultural training in 2008-09. How many of the remaining 4,463 staff will the minister be including in targets for future training and in what time frames?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. I know your question related to cross-cultural training within government departments. Through the multicultural action plans each department is actually required to report to me about the measures they are taking within their departments to meet their various targets. For example, we did cross-cultural training in the Department of Communities and Disability Services. There were some other examples as well. For example, the Queensland Police Service and Queensland Transport have online cross-cultural training programs for their staff, which is fantastic. We also fund the Ethnic Communities Council in this regard.

I would envisage that through these multicultural action plans the departments will have to provide us with more comprehensive information about what they are doing in relation to cross-cultural training. I can reassure the member that this is a very serious issue. I am also advised by the director-general that this is a rolling program and that new staff who come into the employment of the new Department of Communities will participate in cross-cultural training as part of their induction.

Mr CRIPPS: With reference to page 3-18 of the SDS and the \$9.2 million of expenditure on multicultural affairs, will the minister please advise how much was spent in 2008-09 on the delivery of health awareness programs to the multicultural communities of Queensland? How much is allocated to the delivery of these health awareness programs for 2009-10?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. I have some information from Queensland Health about what it is actually doing. As I said previously, each department is required to report to me through their multicultural action plans. Under the Healthier Multicultural Communities Initiative Queensland Health has committed ongoing funding of approximately \$2 million per annum to multicultural health services to improve access to services and programs for Queensland's culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

In July 2008, with recurrent funding of \$1.2 million, Queensland Health established a state-wide refugee health service called Refugee Health Queensland with assessment clinics in South Brisbane, Logan, Zillmere, Toowoomba, Cairns and Townsville. These clinics provide humanitarian entrants and asylum seekers with initial health assessments, including vaccinations, and coordinate referrals to existing services for continuing care, in particular to general practitioners. That is an example of what Queensland Health is doing. I am also advised in relation to the other part of my portfolio and the HACC services that we are also making sure that that money is actually going out to multicultural communities as well.

Mr CRIPPS: With reference to page 3-18 of the SDS, how much has been expended by the minister's department on the delivery of youth engagement programs in the multicultural communities of Queensland? How much is allocated for the delivery of these youth engagement programs in 2010?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for that very important question. As part of the new round of \$700,000 worth of multicultural assistance grants, which will be going out shortly, we will continue to fund festivals but I think it is very important that we look at promoting cultural awareness in local communities. Last year's grants funding went to groups to promote youth engagement. The Police Service's cultural liaison officers worked on youth engagement.

The Queenslander of the Year, Jim Bellos, does a fantastic job in engaging young people of different backgrounds in a soccer competition which I have been to several times. I think projects like that will help. I recently attended World Refugee Day. They had a big soccer tournament as well. It brings together youths from different backgrounds and they engage and forget about any differences they have.

CHAIR: The time allocated for questions by non-government members has expired. I will ask the first question. How is the government contributing to creating more inclusive communities for Queenslanders from a multicultural background, as mentioned on page 3-2 of the SDS, by funding language and interpreter services?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member very much for the question. The Bligh government is meeting its commitment to creating more inclusive communities for Queenslanders from a multicultural background by funding language and interpreter services. The Queensland government's multicultural policy, *Multicultural Queensland—making a world of difference*, provides a blueprint for this area with a focus on delivering social, cultural and economic benefits for the future. Our language services policy is part of the multicultural policy and is our commitment to ensuring that language is not a barrier for culturally and linguistically diverse clients and stakeholders of government programs and services. The language services policy states that departments must budget for and engage interpreters as required.

In 2008-09 the Queensland government's expenditure on interpreter related services was \$5.8 million for both government services and non-government funded services. I note that in last year's estimates hearing the figure that was outlined was only that provided by the Department of Communities. So now we are able to give you a whole-of-government figure. The expenditure for 2009-10 will be dependent on the demand for the service within each individual department.

In 2008 the Bligh government made it a priority to improve the responsiveness of services delivered by government funded NGOs. In October of that year the Premier advised all ministers who fund non-government organisations to deliver services to make provisions within their budget to meet the costs of accessing interpreter services. I think that was a very important initiative of the Premier and one we are now seeing the benefits of out there in the local community.

In my portfolio, Disability Services announced funding of \$613,000 from 2008-09 to 2009-10 to enable Deaf Services Queensland to undertake a two-year state-wide pilot. In 2008-09 the Department of Communities funded \$243,000 for interpreter services to clients of Housing, Child Safety, Disabilities and Communities. In addition, the Department of Communities provided seed funding of \$85,000 to the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland to deliver training to agencies in the government and the private sector on engaging interpreters. This will deliver fairer and more inclusive communities to clients of disability, mental health and Home and Community Care programs by providing funded non-government services to increase access to interpreters and translator services.

Under the Healthier Multicultural Communities Initiative, Queensland Health has committed ongoing funding of \$2 million to multicultural health services to improve access to services and programs for Queensland's culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The state-wide interpreting service will ensure timely access to interpreters for clients of all Queensland government hospitals and clinics.

Ms JARRATT: Part of building inclusive communities involves making government services easier to access for culturally and linguistically diverse Queenslanders. You spoke before in answer to a question from the opposition about the number of public servants who are accessing training in this area. Could you tell the committee a little more about how the government is training public servants to be culturally competent?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member for the question and for giving me the opportunity to add to the previous answer. The Bligh government is committed to building a culturally inclusive and competent public sector to deliver services and programs that are easy to access for Queensland's culturally and linguistically diverse community. In order to meet this commitment, I can report to the member that government departments and funded non-government organisations continue to reap the benefits of cross-cultural competency training. The Smart State cultural competency training strategy was established in 2007 to drive this focus on the training.

In 2007 Multicultural Affairs Queensland delivered cross-cultural train-the-trainer courses to more than 63 participants across the state. Throughout 2008 the department has established and monitored a state-wide network of qualified cross-cultural training providers to provide opportunities for continued professional development. These initiatives have helped build a strong foundation of cross-cultural trainers. Also in 2007 the government provided \$30,000 for the Partners in Cultural Competence training program, implemented by the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland. A total of 542 participants have undertaken training since the program began, with 241 participating between January and April 2009 alone.

In my portfolio, Multicultural Affairs Queensland drives cross-cultural training and diversity in management initiatives across Queensland government departments through its multicultural action plans, as I mentioned previously. Every dollar that we spend on cross-cultural competency helps us to meet our commitment to protect and create jobs in Queensland. In 2008-09 there has been an increased delivery of cross-cultural training within Queensland government agencies. It is right across from the Queensland Police Service, Transport and Child Safety to Queensland Health.

Mr CHOI: Minister, before I ask you this question, can I take the opportunity to thank your department, particularly the office of MAQ, for their advice, support and friendship in the last few years or so when I was involved in the portfolio. I drove them mad at times, but I am sure they would agree that it was all for a good cause. I am sure you would agree that social cohesion is very important to our community. Can you advise the committee how your department is promoting social cohesion, particularly in light of recent racial tension in other jurisdictions?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member very much for his question. I also thank him for his commitment to multicultural affairs across Queensland, as the former parliamentary secretary for multicultural affairs. One of the core responsibilities of Multicultural Affairs Queensland is promoting community cohesion through good government policy. Part of this policy is delivered through the recently announced three-year \$5.9 million funding for the LAMP and CAMS programs, as I mentioned previously. These programs respond to issues affecting Queenslanders who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and to assist them to fully participate in everyday community activities.

We are all aware of reports in the media of alleged racist attacks on Indian students in New South Wales and Victoria. Today there are over 26,000 Queenslanders who lay claim to Indian ancestry. As well as those Queenslanders of Indian origin, Queensland plays host to more than 13,000 Indian students who have chosen Queensland as their destination to study. Queensland is regarded internationally as a safe and friendly destination for international students and visitors.

As minister I have taken a proactive approach and, as such, convened a ministerial round table on 17 June this year here at Parliament House. That round table included leaders from the Indian community and my ministerial colleague the Hon. Geoff Wilson, the parliamentary secretary for trade—youself, Michael Choi—and the Speaker, the Hon. John Mickel. Also present were senior representatives from the Queensland police and higher education providers. We had someone from UQ and also someone from QUT attend. The round table gave me an opportunity to hear firsthand any concerns that the Indian community may have in Queensland. I reassured our Indian community that we as a government will not accept any form of racism and that we value very highly the contributions that the Indian community has made and continues to make to Queensland.

This was a very positive and reassuring meeting. Arising from our discussions I have asked the department to dedicate an officer from Multicultural Affairs Queensland to work closely with the Indian community over the next six months. My department has cooperated and will continue to actively cooperate with other government departments and levels of government so as to best address any safety concerns about our international students. This level of cooperation also applies to other issues and challenges that have eventuated or may eventuate so as to ensure that we remain a strong and cohesive society.

International students are most welcome and are part of Queensland's fourth largest export industry. The Queensland government is committed to ensuring the safety of our international students and values the significant contribution that they provide. I would just like to advise the committee that I plan to reconvene that Indian round table, probably in the next four to five months, just to make sure there are no further tensions or issues that arise, because we simply do not want to see what happened in New South Wales and Victoria happen here in Queensland.

Mr WELLS: I refer to page 3-16 of the SDS. Local councils provide critical social support for people, particularly in regional and remote areas. Will the minister advise how her department is partnering with local councils to deliver better support for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds? Would she agree that councils that support and celebrate linguistically diverse backgrounds are thereby demonstrating their *savoir faire*?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member very much for his question and, of course, I agree with him. The Bligh government is continuing to deliver its commitment to support culturally aware workers based in local councils. In April I announced that the Bligh government would commit funding of more than \$2 million over three years to maintain the Local Area Multicultural Partnership program, or LAMP. LAMP provides support for local communities through the efforts of 14 full-time workers in local councils. The state government has been partnering with local councils since 1998 in delivering better services and support for communities across Queensland. The Local Area Multicultural Partnership program involves the state government, 14 local councils and the LGAQ, as I mentioned earlier. I note that the member for Whitsunday is fortunate to have a LAMP worker based within the Mackay Regional Council, operating in part of her electorate. I am sure the member would value the work that that worker does in her local community.

The main aim of the program is to promote positive relations across the whole community and to deliver improved levels of access to services, planning and consultation for diverse groups within our community. It works towards these objectives by supporting the key role of councils in managing community relations at a local level. The workers assist councils to promote cultural and social inclusion at the local level for Queensland's diverse communities to prevent isolation and marginalisation.

I am also very pleased to say that the program delivers on the Bligh government's election commitment to support and protect Queensland jobs and deliver fairer, stronger and more caring communities across the state. Under the program councils are supported to make their core business accessible for everyone, regardless of their cultural background.

In the previous year a range of successful initiatives were delivered under the program. For example, the LAMP worker at the Moreton Bay Regional Council has established cross-cultural training as a key component of that council's induction process for new employees. I am sure the people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the electorate of Murrumba will begin to see the benefit of the culturally aware and responsive council staff. Workers under this program have also supported their councils to develop or expand multilingual content in their libraries and make information about council services available in languages other than English.

The program has also increased cooperation between different levels of government, which has reduced duplication of government services and resulted in improved coordination to the benefit of diverse communities, an example being the LAMP worker at Logan City Council who recently coordinated a forum, involving three levels of government, for government service delivery in the area.

CHAIR: Minister, I know that Queenslanders from a culturally and linguistically diverse background benefit from a range of supports in their local communities. Can the minister advise the committee how the Bligh government assists community organisations throughout the state respond to the needs of Queenslanders from a multicultural background, as mentioned on page 3-7 of the SDS?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the chair for her question. I am pleased to talk more about the CAMS funding. People from more than 200 nationalities call Queensland home, and we recognise the strength that this diversity can offer Queensland. The year 2009 marks 10 years since the Queensland Labor government provided funding to NGOs to support our diverse communities and encourage multiculturalism. The funding has been provided under the Community Action for a Multicultural Society program, otherwise known as CAMS. This program is held in very high regard by the multicultural sector and is highly valued by the communities it supports. In April I was pleased to announce the Bligh government's continued funding of \$3.9 million over three years for this program.

As well as providing a significant level of support for local communities, CAMS provides employment for 20 funded workers in 17 different community organisations. These workers are based at community organisations throughout Queensland, including Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Logan, Mackay, the Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba, Townsville and Bundaberg. In the initial CAMS funding allocation, the Bundaberg and District Neighbourhood Centre was not successful during the application process. At a meeting with the Ethnic Communities Council the situation in Bundaberg was raised with me. I undertook to have this decision reviewed and took care to ensure that the views of the local community were heard.

I spoke with the mayor of the Bundaberg Regional Council, Councillor Lorraine Pyefinch, who supported the continued need for a CAMS position in the Bundaberg region. In May I allocated \$40,000 to the Bundaberg and District Neighbourhood Centre under the CAMS program so it could continue its good work in the region's multicultural community.

Centacare Cairns was previously funded at \$40,000 a year for a part-time position. It applied for \$80,000 per year in the most recent funding round but was only successful in receiving \$40,000. After some very hard lobbying from Steve Wettenhall, the member for Barron River, and also from Tom Gilmore, the mayor in the tablelands region, I was convinced that the good work of Centacare Cairns deserved to be funded with \$80,000 for a full-time position which would not only look after that Cairns region but also outreach into the tablelands. I think this is a very good outcome—

CHAIR: Hear, hear!

Ms PALASZCZUK:—for both Bundaberg and Cairns. We need to make sure that we have these workers out in the regions and delivering for the local groups. Some of the positions funded are workers who focus specifically on the needs of refugees, Pacific Islanders and Australian South Sea Islander communities.

Ms JARRATT: Minister, as you have already asserted, racism is a scourge that no Queenslander should tolerate or suffer. Could you please tell the committee more about how your department is building safer and more inclusive communities through its antiracism campaign?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for the question. It gives me a good opportunity to talk about the Queensland Roars Against Racism campaign, which is one of the Bligh government's commitments to advancing positive community relations which I briefly touched on before. Through partnerships, positive messaging and community engagement activities, the strategy aims to ensure that our society respects and values its cultural diversity. During 2008-09 the Queensland Roars Against Racism message was present at Paniyiri festival, the Queensland Police Service ethnic cup, World Refugee Week activities and Queensland Week activities.

The 2008 Queensland Multicultural Festival celebrated with the Queensland Roars Against Racism precinct, which was a hub of activity featuring Brisbane Roar Football Club players and Queensland Roar celebrity ambassadors. After two highly successful matches involving overseas opponents in 2007-08, we also celebrated with another major sporting event which saw top international team Glasgow Celtic head to Brisbane from Scotland for the Queensland Roars Against Racism Cup match against Brisbane Roar Football Club. I had the pleasure last Saturday of welcoming the Celtic team to Brisbane. Even though they were a bit jet lagged, they obviously got over that because they beat our team the following day. They are a very prestigious international team. It is great to see that they could come out to Queensland. From discussions I have had, they have indicated that they would like to come out again. That will be in the domain of the Minister for Sport. He can negotiate that. It was wonderful to see 31,000 people out there on Sunday. It was fantastic.

We are also working with community groups, peak sporting bodies and other professional sporting codes to increase participation by people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This has been shown to improve physical and mental health, reduce high-risk behaviour in young people and ease integration into the community as well as provide other general social benefits. I believe that by encouraging community involvement in the delivery of community relations and antiracism activities the Queensland government is acknowledging the collective wisdom, creativity and experience of the community in driving successful outcomes. Good community relations rely on generating an increased sense of belonging and pride and a shared understanding of what it is that defines us as Queenslanders.

I look forward to Queensland Roars Against Racism continuing. I would like to place on the public record my thanks to Garry Page and his team in delivering a wonderful outcome. It all went off extremely well. I am quite sure that we will continue in the years to come and his team will be involved as well as the Minister for Sport's department.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Before you make your closing comments, can I just answer the final question we had on notice?

CHAIR: Yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The member for Maryborough, Mr Foley, asked a question in relation to the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme and wheelchairs. Funds that were provided to top up the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme by regions are reported approximately as follows: Far North Queensland, \$38,000—I will give you the exact figures later; North Queensland, \$29,000; Mackay-Whitsunday, \$15,000; Fitzroy-central west, \$19,000; Darling Downs/south-west, \$55,000; Wide Bay-Burnett, \$28,000; Sunshine Coast, \$59,000; greater Brisbane, \$12,000; Moreton region, \$15,000; and Gold Coast, approximately \$11,000. In total \$284,361 is reported as the top-up for the Medical Aids Subsidy Program.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. There being no further questions, that concludes the examination of the estimates for the portfolio of the Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs. Thank you very much, Minister, and officers for your attendance. The committee has concluded its consideration of the matters referred to it by the parliament.

The transcript of this part of the hearing will be available on the Hansard website within two hours. On behalf of the committee, I say thank you to Hansard officers, the timekeepers and the parliamentary attendants for their excellent assistance today. I also take this opportunity to, in particular, mention our secretariat and to thank very much Mrs Helen Bogiatzis and Ms Erin Pasley, who have assisted us, plus the secretariat who have done an excellent job looking after the committee. Thank you very much to all of my fellow committee members. The minister may wish to thank the committee.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I, too, place on record my thanks to yourself as chair and all of the members of the committee for your time today and for your questions. I would also like to thank the Parliament House staff and, in particular, my director-general, Linda Apelt, and the senior staff from the Department of Disability Services. I would also like to place on the public record my thanks to my own personal ministerial staff who have worked very hard over the last month.

CHAIR: Thank you very much to all. I declare the hearing of Estimates Committee D closed.

Committee adjourned at 4.06 pm