

FRIDAY, 16 JULY 2010

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D—MAIN ROADS

Estimates Committee D Members

Ms G Grace (Chair)
Mr AP Cripps
Ms CT Male
Mr AP McLindon
Mr MT Ryan
Ms FS Simpson
Hon. DM Wells

In Attendance

Hon. CA Wallace, Minister for Main Roads
Mr L Spencer, Principal Adviser
Department of Transport and Main Roads
Mr D Stewart, Director-General
Mr A Tesch, Associate Director-General
Mr P Brown, Principal Adviser

Committee met at 9.00 am

CHAIR: Minister, good morning. I declare the hearing of Estimates Committee D open. I start by acknowledging the traditional owners and pay my respects to their elders, both past and present. 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 is the member for Maroochydore and is deputy chair. The other committee members are Mr Andrew Cripps, the member for Hinchinbrook; Ms Carolyn Male, the member for Pine Rivers; Mr Aidan McLindon, the member for Beaudesert; Mr Mark Ryan, the member for Morayfield; and Hon. Dean Wells, the member for Murrumba.

The committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in Appropriation Bill 2010 for the areas set down in the order of appointment dated 20 May 2010. This morning the committee will examine the organisational units within the portfolio of the Minister for Main Roads. Following lunch, the committee will examine units within the portfolio of the Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs. The committee will adjourn proceedings for the following periods of time: morning tea from 10.30 to 11 am, lunch from 12.30 pm to 1.30 pm and afternoon tea from 3.30 pm to 4 pm.

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 otherwise. All present at the moment are asked to turn their mobile phones off or to switch to silent mode, please. In accordance with standing order 206, any person admitted to this hearing may be excluded at the discretion of the chair or by order of the committee.

The committee has resolved that audio and video recording of these proceedings by the Parliamentary Service cameras and microphones shall be broadcast via the Parliamentary Service website and to receivers throughout the parliamentary precinct. Television film coverage and photography will be allowed during the chair's opening statements and the introductory statements of each minister, as well as for a short period during each changeover of ministerial advisers.

I 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 period. An extension of time may be given with the consent of the questioner. A double time 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. 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 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 no longer than five minutes. Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, Madam Chair, and members of the committee for your presence and for this opportunity for parliament to examine the 2010-11 roads budget. The Bligh government is building a better, brighter future for Queenslanders. This morning thousands of motorists drove across our newest bridge—the Ted Smout bridge. Australia's longest bridge opened to traffic yesterday.

Mr WELLS: Hear, hear!

Mr WALLACE: I take the interjection from the member for Murrumba. The middle bit is in your electorate, member for Murrumba, so you are a local custodian, if you like. It is an engineering feat—2.7 kilometres long, linking Brisbane to the bayside. The \$315 million project was signed, sealed and delivered ahead of schedule by the Bligh Labor government. It is all about easing congestion for motorists and it is about jobs—700 of them. It comes hot on the heels of the country's biggest road and bridge project—the Gateway corridor upgrade. Both of these projects will go a long way towards tackling congestion and slashing travel times for busy motorists.

More than 200,000 people walked across the new Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge at our community open day. Member for Murrumba, you will be interested to hear that we had about 70,000 turn out on Sunday at the new Ted Smout bridge. That is a feather in the cap for your local residents who turned out in droves. By the end of the year, we will have 12 lanes—six northbound, six southbound—on our new Gateway Motorway six months ahead of schedule. Those twin bridges are more than a landmark: they are at the front line of our fight to tackle congestion.

With 2,000 people moving to Queensland each week, this new infrastructure could not come at a better time. 2010 is shaping up to be one of the most significant years in the delivery of better roads to manage growth and to deliver a brighter future for Queenslanders. The infrastructure that has been delivered by the Bligh government right across Queensland will make a big difference to people's lives. It is about building for the future and, importantly, generating jobs. The Gateway project alone has created up to 6,000 jobs for workers at a time when we all realise jobs and job security are more important than ever before. How did we achieve this? We had a plan. We stuck to that plan. We made the right choices, the right decisions, and we delivered for all Queenslanders.

We had our detractors unfortunately on the other side of politics—doomsayers who talked about distance based tolling and the like. I say it again: it is not on, not now, not ever under this government. The Gateway corridor is our true blue investment in Queenslanders—a \$2.5 billion investment to tackle congestion, slash travel times and deliver jobs for all Queenslanders. But our commitment extends well beyond the south-east corner of Queensland. In regional Queensland, roads mean jobs. We have 12,000 men and women hard at work on our vast road network in regional Queensland. Our \$3.3 billion roads budget is about building a better, brighter future for all Queenslanders no matter where they live. It is three times more than what was spent on roads under the coalition.

Our roads projects are great and small—from the \$38 million set aside for the Douglas Arterial Road to the 97 road safety projects planned for every pocket of the state under our Safer Roads Sooner initiative. That is a \$66 million investment to boost road safety for motorists. Our road building program is reaching out across the state—from the tip of the cape, Cardwell, Cooroy, Cornish Creek out west, the Capricorn Highway, the Calliope Range, Crow's Nest, Carrara and Cairns. Our foot is firmly on the pedal. We are building bridges, bypasses, overpasses, underpasses, flyovers and footbridges. We are maintaining our roads with \$700 million on maintenance alone. That is about the size of the coalition's whole capital budget for the roads portfolio when they last sat on the treasury bench. We are repairing, widening, strengthening and expanding our vast road network.

One of the delights I have as roads minister is to meet our hardworking Main Roads staff. Just last week when I hit the road in regional Queensland to inspect some of the roadworks I met some great people. While I am on the subject, I take this opportunity to congratulate Bert Van Krieken from

Townsville. I was up there for Bert's retirement party last week. Then there is Les Ford, who also retired—a legend within Main Roads with more than 40 years of service. They are typical of the Main Roads staff—hardworking and dedicated to their job. With people like Les and Bert on board, it is no wonder Main Roads is helping build a better, brighter future for all Queenslanders.

Our roads budget is a budget for growth. It is a budget that will generate jobs for Queenslanders—around 30,000 jobs for workers on road construction this year. It is a budget that will build a stronger economy in Queensland. It is a budget that will deliver safer and more secure roads across Queensland. It is a budget that will help us meet our future growth.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The minister's time has expired. The first period of questioning is allocated to non-government members. I call the member for Maroochydore.

Ms SIMPSON: Good morning, Minister. Good morning, departmental staff. Minister, I refer to the answer from the transport minister yesterday that effectively the government is forcing more than 5,000 extra trucks on to our roads by walking away from cattle trains. Minister, in light of the already existing bottlenecks in the road system—such as the Toowoomba range, where a second range crossing is needed—and the blatant lack of interest your colleagues showed yesterday on this issue, what will you say to Queensland drivers when they are faced with sharing the road with these extra trucks?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Maroochydore for the question. As the transport minister explained yesterday, this government for the first time is making a community service obligation payable for the transport of livestock on our railways—something which the coalition never, ever did. I am really proud of what we are doing in regional Queensland, where the bulk of these movements take place. As I said in my opening statement, there are around 11,000 jobs in regional Queensland on roads and road construction. When you look at our figures in regional Queensland, as a regional Queensland, I am very proud of those facts. In fact, around \$1,046, off the top of my head, for every man, woman and child is spent on road construction and road maintenance in regional Queensland. Compare that to the south-east corner, where around \$620-odd per head is spent. So we are really pulling our weight in regional Queensland and those roads deserve our attention.

I travel a lot in regional Queensland. Last week I was in Gladstone, Rockhampton, Charters Towers, Emerald, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns looking at regional roads and talking to people who are building those roads. As you know, Queensland is our most decentralised state and has the largest state controlled network. We have around 33,300 kilometres of roads in Queensland—a network that stretches from here to London and back. So to cope with not only increased growth of our roads in regional Queensland as population grows but more traffic on our roads we are making a big investment in our regional roads.

In recognition of what regional Queensland is doing and the Bligh government's commitment to rural and regional Queensland, a total of \$1.6 billion in state and federal funding has been allocated in 2010-11—46 per cent of the total road funding allocation. That is a big share for regional Queensland and it shows that we are really pulling our weight when it comes to regional Queensland. One of the schemes that I, along with my director-general, have developed is an extra \$30 million in funding for some of those western councils so that they can look after those roads of regional significance where a lot of this freight movement takes place. That has been welcomed by regional Queensland. I want to congratulate the first council group who were successful in receiving funding of \$7 million—the RAPAD group. Mayors in Winton and surrounds have fought that fight to get that extra funding. They realise that traffic and freight will increase on regional roads, and we are doing our bit at a state government level.

As I said, \$1.6 billion is allocated to regional and rural roads this year—a massive amount. We are pulling our weight to ensure that we can cope with the increased traffic that will take place. Regional Queensland is going to grow. Our exports will grow, particularly our commodity exports, not only cattle but also mining and other agricultural produce.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, what additional maintenance have you factored in to restore our roads as a result of the additional trucks that they will be carrying due to this government's short-sighted approach, particularly following the exorbitant rail cost rises already implemented prior to the sale of QR?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the honourable member for Maroochydore for the question. I am pleased to answer that because I am excited about maintenance on our roads across the state. We will have over \$700 million spent on maintenance on our roads this year. If you compare that to the last budget when the opposition were in power, that is nearly their entire budget compared to just what we are spending on maintenance across our road network.

One of the interesting figures on maintenance which I would like to draw to the attention of the committee is that, at the end of 2009-10, 17.1 per cent of the state controlled road network surfacing was older than the target optimum seal, which is an improvement on last year. So we are getting out there and it shows that we are maintaining our roads and really looking after that great asset we have got. A lot of that is in regional Queensland where this freight will move.

Significant lengths of pavement and their surfacing have performed well beyond their design life. In part, this is due to the sound maintenance and intervention practices adopted by my department. Excluding NDRAA funding, the state expenditure on maintenance in 2008-09 totalled \$470 million. This reflected an ongoing increase in annual maintenance expenditure by some \$90 million, or 23 per cent. The member for Maroochydore asks, 'What are we doing to maintain our roads?' I can say that we are increasing the budget on maintenance by 23 per cent. This is good news for our roads across the state.

One of the issues we face in Queensland with our large network—and one which I continue to speak about publicly and I have spoken about before at these particular committee meetings—is the issue of federal maintenance on our national network. I have said it before and I will say it again: national governments at all levels have let down Queensland when it comes to road funding for our national network for at least the last 40 years. I want to congratulate the Labor government in Canberra which doubled its road funding commitment to Queensland in its first term, but we are coming from a low base. Queenslanders were ripped off when it came to the previous coalition government's contribution to our national network.

An outstanding issue that the state faces is that \$375 million of the federal maintenance money—strengthening and widening funding—is tied to the Bruce Highway, as it should be because it is our major north-south network. That leaves only \$51.35 million over five years for maintenance for the remainder of Queensland's National Highway network. As I said, this is not good enough and we are continuing to make representations to the Australian government for appropriate funding for our network needs.

One of the other programs I would like to mention while I have a chance—and we are talking about freight on our roads—is our Regional Bridge Renewal Program. What we are doing out there is we are strengthening a lot of our bridges so we can get—

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, you have not answered my question as to what is the cost of the impact of having 5,000 extra trucks on the road, with 350,000 head of stock coming off Queensland Rail onto the roads? What is the extra cost of having these trucks going onto the roads off rail which is going to rip up our roads? Please answer that: what is the cost of that impact? Has your department done any costing?

Mr WALLACE: As the transport minister said yesterday, the Queensland government is looking at a community service obligation for rail for livestock transport. So this is only conjecture; it is only, again, the 'Chicken Little' of Queensland politics trying to scare people, saying that we are going to get all of these extra trucks on the road when we are actually going to pay a subsidy for livestock transport on rail.

What we are doing on our roads across regional Queensland where the bulk of this freight moves—and I will say it again—is increasing expenditure on maintenance. I repeat: we are increasing expenditure on maintenance. This year we will spend over \$700 million on maintenance on our roads. We are building capacity on our roads. We are maintaining those roads. We will not just see increases in cattle freight on our regional roads; we will see increases in mining traffic on our roads, we will see increases in grey nomads on our roads, we will see increases in mums and dads travelling on our roads as our population increases. One of those things that regional centres want is better roads to attract more tourists to their locations. They want more vehicles on their roads in regional Queensland.

As I said, I was in Emerald last week and I was talking to the mayor out there about the increase in traffic. Indeed, we looked at the brand-new set of traffic lights—Emerald's first set of traffic lights. It shows that Emerald is growing, and that is a good thing in regional Queensland. Gone are the days when the National Party kept its foot on the brake on growth in regional Queensland. We are out there developing regional Queensland, and one of the key arteries is roads. I was with the mayor at Emerald the other day and we were talking about that growth in traffic. He is very keen to see an increase in grey nomads on his roads. They are the people who come to town, who buy some groceries, who stay a couple of nights and who really put services back into the community. One of the things that I committed to him was that we would look at what is called a dump point, or a place to get rid of the waste from your campervan or motorhome in Blackall, and we will go ahead and do that.

It is not only tourism which will see growth on our roads, it is not only increases in cattle and other agricultural commodities that will see growth on our roads; it is also that big increase in mining traffic. We are working very closely with other levels of government to plan for the future in regional roads where we are going to see those big increases. One of the areas we are looking at is the Surat Basin and we have heard a lot about that. The Surat Basin transport study is an important document that will really focus our attention on what we are going to do across that network for the next couple of years. I have talked about the Warrego Highway before, and it is the key road artery for the Surat Basin. It currently carries about 31,000 vehicles per day through Toowoomba.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, you would be aware that the Queensland government has raked in an additional half a billion dollars in the last financial year following the imposition of a fuel tax on Queensland motorists for the first time. How then can the minister justify the \$250 million cut in road spending this year? It is not an increase. That is not the foot on the accelerator; that is the foot on the brake. You have stalled the car, you are going backwards. That is a quarter of a billion dollar cut.

Mr WALLACE: I am proud of this roads budget in Queensland because it is more than three times bigger than what the tories ever did in this state. Let us compare our roads budget in Queensland with her tory mates in Western Australia. Let us compare it and let us have a look. Here in Queensland, the per capita spend for roads in Queensland—for every man, woman and child—is \$732.39. Let me repeat that—and the member for Maroochydore is writing it down; good on you—it is \$732.39. What are her tory mates in Western Australia spending on roads? It is a bigger state than Queensland, but they are spending \$227.31 per capita. I will say those figures again: \$732.39 compared to \$227.31.

We are delivering here in Queensland. Go and have a look at our brand-new, completed Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge. It was completed under time, it will be completed on budget. It is a great testament to the men and women who built that and a great testament to my department that planned it. What about what happened with the Ted Smout bridge on Sunday? I know the member for Murrumba still has a big smile on his face. What a great day out there, and it is a wonderful community asset.

It is not only those big projects that we are delivering with \$732.39 for every man, woman and child in Queensland; it is the smaller projects, the projects that will improve safety in our state. I was in Mackay on Wednesday last week. In fact, we watched the State of Origin and watched Queensland win that game there that night.

Mr CRIPPS: Hear, hear!

Mr WALLACE: I take that interjection from the member for Hinchinbrook. I was at an intersection of a road. It is a dangerous intersection—the Peak Downs Highway and Horse And Jockey Road near the Racecourse mill. There have been a number of complaints there for years from motorists. It is a very, very dangerous intersection. So what have we done? It is not only those big projects that we see—like the Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge and the Ted Smout bridge—but it is the small projects that will help save lives and keep people safe. We will put a set of traffic lights there with around \$2 million in funding. It is a real win for that local community. I was talking to one of the journalists who came along for that announcement. He said, 'I drive this road every day. This is such a sensible solution.'

I have to congratulate my Main Roads staff across the state who, with this big budget, are rolling out projects big and little to the people of Queensland. We are spending \$732 for every man, woman and child in Queensland on roads. Compare that to the national average of \$417.20. It shows that we are ahead of the game and we will continue to deliver not only the big projects that get the big headlines but also those smaller ones that help keep people safe. So right across the state we are delivering projects, from the tip of the cape right down to the border, for the people of Queensland.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, do you know the difference between an accelerator and a brake? You have actually seen a cut of a quarter of a billion dollars in the budget. You have actually had a cut, not an increase, yet you are still trying to compare with other states. It is a cut, not an increase, and you are expecting motorists to cop an extra half a billion dollars in petrol tax thanks to your government. That is a decrease. Will the minister acknowledge that?

Mr WALLACE: What I will acknowledge is that big projects are being finished on time and on budget. That is why budget figures change from year to year, because we are delivering big projects, we are delivering small projects and we are delivering on time and on budget. We have delivered the Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge earlier than was projected, we have delivered that wonderful Ted Smout bridge and we are delivering infrastructure right across the state.

Let me talk about some of that infrastructure. Let me talk about Cardwell Range in the member for Hinchinbrook's electorate. That will be a big win for motorists in North and Far North Queensland. I want to congratulate the member for Hinchinbrook because he knows just how important that is, and I know he has fought for that for his community since his election. That is a big project. It is \$115 million for the people of Far North Queensland.

Let me talk about Townsville, the second capital of our state. For the Townsville port access road, there is \$190 million, and thanks to the federal Labor government in Canberra which has contributed half of the funds. Again, in Townsville, another big project is the \$110 million being spent on the Douglas ring-road duplication. That is good news for the people of Townsville in that growing city—again, it is the second capital of Queensland. Going further north up to Cairns, we have rolled out plans for that Cairns southern access corridor and that is good news for the people of Cairns, especially in that very, very busy southern corridor.

What we are doing with that funding is we are maintaining our job numbers. As I said, we have seen an increase in maintenance this year. That is good news for the people of Queensland as well because we know our job drivers with maintenance. We can actually employ more people through maintenance than capital construction; the job drivers are very, very different. I will talk about some of

those job drivers. We have had, quite rightly, a concentration on new capital projects over the last couple of years. For every million we spend on new construction, we employ about 7.54 people. As I said, we are changing some of that focus to maintenance across the network, and our job drivers in maintenance are 15.8 people per million dollars we spend.

So it is good news, especially in a lot of those regional councils where some of our Main Roads programs are the biggest employers in regional Queensland and Western Queensland. Right across the state we will see budgets change from year to year. That happens in a big budget where you deliver those big projects, but importantly we are not taking our foot off the accelerator when it comes to things like maintenance and employment across the system.

I am proud of the budget I have got in Main Roads this year. It is employing around 30,000 Queenslanders. It is making a real difference across the state. We have those big projects in the Far North, we have those big projects down here, but the maintenance we have got in Western Queensland really deserves a tick.

Ms SIMPSON: I refer to the fact that the budget papers show that infrastructure spending in forward estimates drops off substantially, with the budget papers showing the net acquisition of non-financial assets, equals base capital, halving between 2009-10 and 2013-14. Minister, doesn't this undermine any commitment to certainty in the future for Queensland's construction industry?

Mr WALLACE: I travel across the state and I speak to people in the construction industry from the smallest employers to the largest employers, and do you know what they congratulate us on in Queensland, apart from spending more than any other state per capita on our roads? They congratulate us on a document called RIP, our Roads Implementation Program. That is a groundbreaking document pioneered by my department. A few of the other states are going to adopt our RIP approach. That gives certainty to those employers across the state. Any member of parliament worth their salt will know about the RIP and they will know about the programs enclosed in the RIP and what it does. As I talk to the people who employ people across our state, the construction managers, they say, 'Thank you very much for your RIP. We only wish the other states would follow suit.' What does that do? That guarantees funding for the year ahead, the two years ahead, and it predicts those projects for the next five years. We are the only state that does that. Let me talk about some of those projects across the state.

On the north coast—the member for Maroochydore's area—there is the Sunshine Coast Bruce Highway study. We are really looking at the Bruce Highway from the Bribie Island turn-off north. That will have increased growth in that particular area. That is a really important section of the Bruce Highway as there is increased growth, and we are looking at that study.

In the member for Maroochydore's own electorate we have important projects like \$300,000 toward the Sunshine Coast council's duplication from two to four lanes on Evans Street, Maroochydore. The total state government contribution will be \$1.92 million. This project will, importantly, decrease congestion for busy Sunshine Coast residents.

In the member for Hinchinbrook's electorate, I have talked about the very important Cardwell Range project totalling \$115 million. In his electorate alone—here is a big jobs winner—around 1,000 jobs are being sustained through our works program.

The member for Beaudesert is also a big winner—around 248 jobs are being sustained through our roads program in his electorate of Beaudesert—another feather in the cap of Main Roads Queensland. One of the projects that is dear to my heart is the \$613 million Cooroy to Curra section of the Bruce Highway. It is probably the most dangerous section of road in Queensland. It is a section of road which needed attention. I have to congratulate the federal Labor government in Canberra for their funding for that road. It was really needed. Work has started on that section of road, with earthworks underway.

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

Ms MALE: I want to continue with the issue of job creation due to the work that Main Roads is doing in construction and maintenance. I refer the minister to SDS 2-113 and the strategic challenge to build a stronger economy for Queenslanders, and I ask: can the minister please advise how many jobs in road construction will be generated in this financial year across the state?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for her question. She certainly knows the importance of good roads and job creation in our community. Our \$3.3 billion roads budget is about building a brighter, better future for all Queenslanders. As I have said before, it is more than three times what the coalition spent on roads in their last budget. Our budget is about building better roads and generating jobs. It comes at a time when jobs and job security are more important than ever before. We are providing around 30,000 jobs a year for roadworkers in Queensland. Our road projects are great and small, from our massive \$2.5 billion investment in the twin Sir Leo bridges and the Gateway corridor to the 97 road safety projects planned for every pocket of the state under our Safer Roads Sooner initiative. That is a \$66 million investment to boost the safety of motorists.

How have we been able to deliver this \$3.3 billion roads budget? As I have said before and I will say it again, we had a plan and we have stuck to it. We made the tough choices but the right choices so that we could deliver jobs and infrastructure needed to take Queensland into the future, to build a first-class road network, to ease congestion, to slash travel times and to make life better for motorists no matter where they live in our growth state.

Our road-building program is reaching out across the state from the tip of the cape, Cardwell, Cooroy, Cornish Creek and out west on the Capricorn Highway. At Calliope Range, Crow's Nest, Carrara and Cairns, our foot is firmly on the pedal. We are building bridges and bypasses, underpasses, flyovers and footbridges. We are maintaining, repairing, widening, strengthening, and expanding our vast road network.

Unlike the opposition, who are job blockers and job knockers, we are not. Our record on roads speaks for itself. 2010 will be remembered as the year Labor delivered on key infrastructure for Queenslanders. The Sir Leo Hielscher Bridges will stand tall above them all—ultimately 12 lanes—six northbound, six southbound—delivered six months ahead of schedule. It is a testament to our commitment to build a brighter, better future for Queenslanders.

It is time for another road trip, Madam Chair, this time budget based. On the south coast we are spending more than \$370 million and delivering more than 3,000 jobs. In Brisbane, we are spending \$1.25 billion and delivering more than 9,500 jobs. On the north coast, we are spending \$250 million and delivering 2,000 jobs. On the Darling Downs, we are spending more than \$100 million and delivering in excess of 950 jobs. Out in the south-west, we are spending \$58 million and delivering 500 jobs. In the Wide Bay-Burnett we are spending \$600 million and delivering around 4,700 jobs. In the mighty Fitzroy, we are spending more than \$160 million and delivering 1,400 jobs. In the central west we are spending \$60 million and delivering 550 jobs. In the beautiful Mackay-Whitsunday area, we are spending more than \$145 million and delivering more than 1,200 jobs.

CHAIR: Minister, I refer to page 2-114 of the Service Delivery Statements about growth demands and urban congestion in South-East Queensland. My electorate is well aware of that. I ask the minister to outline government initiatives designed to tackle congestion and slash travel times for busy motorists.

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, Madam Chair, for your question. You certainly know that we have to get on with the job of tackling congestion, and we take that very seriously. As I said, this week the Ted Smout bridge, Australia's longest bridge, opened to traffic, easing congestion for motorists travelling to and from the beautiful bayside. Already thousands of motorists have utilised that new bridge. The \$315 million Ted Smout bridge and the country's biggest road and bridge project—the Gateway corridor upgrade—will go a long way towards tackling congestion and slashing travel times for busy motorists in South-East Queensland.

Let us talk about the twin Sir Leo Hielscher Bridges—or the Sir Leo's, as they are known—across the Brisbane River. They are much more than a landmark; they are at the front line in our fight to tackle congestion. With 2,000 people moving to Queensland each week, this new infrastructure could not come at a better time. As I said before, 2010 is shaping up to be one of the most significant years in the delivery of better roads to manage growth and deliver a brighter future for Queensland.

The infrastructure that has been signed, sealed and delivered right across Queensland will make a big difference to people's lives. It is about building for the future and generating jobs. The Gateway project alone, which will ease congestion, has created 6,000 jobs for workers. We have reached yet another milestone with the completion of 12 kilometres of upgraded motorway all the way from the Port of Brisbane Motorway to the Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road. We have delivered 20 kilometres of high-speed, high-quality motorway up to nine lanes wide.

On top of our Gateway Upgrade Project, we are spending an extra half a billion dollars to widen the Gateway Motorway between two major arterial roads from four to six lanes, and we are delivering a major boost to one of the state's economic engine rooms by extending the Port of Brisbane Motorway. Again, how do we achieve this? We had a plan, we stuck to it, and we made the right choices. They were tough choices but they were the right choices. We are delivering for Queensland. We had our detractors—again from the opposition—who talked about distance based tolling and the like. I will say it again: it is not on—it is not on now, not on ever, not under this government. I will keep saying it until the detractors on the other side of politics get that message. Our true blue investment, \$2.5 billion worth, will ease congestion, slash travel times and deliver jobs for Queenslanders, and it does not get much better than that.

Mr WELLS: My question to the honourable gentleman is based on SDS 2-116. I am sure the honourable gentleman would be extremely disappointed if I did not ask him about the Ted Smout bridge. The other day, as the minister and I were strolling across the Ted Smout bridge, the sun was shining, the pelicans were doing what they do, the fish were jumping and daylight was glinting on Hays Inlet, the minister started to tell me a little bit about where we were going from here as far as the Ted Smout bridge is concerned. I wondered if the honourable minister would share this with the committee: what is next for that particular important artery?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Murrumba for one of the most eloquent questions I have ever received as the minister. The member for Murrumba is right: this is another major piece of infrastructure signed, sealed and delivered by the Bligh government. Not only is the Ted Smout Memorial Bridge finished, as I said earlier, thousands of motorists are driving over it now. It is a \$315 million project and Australia's longest bridge, at 2.7 kilometres, delivered on time and on budget. I joined with the member for Murrumba, the Premier, local members and the bayside community last weekend for the big open day on the bridge. As I said, we had we think close to 70,000 people there on Sunday who took part in the celebrations. It looks spectacular. I am sure anyone who looks at that bridge will agree. Not every bridge, I must admit, member for Murrumba, can enjoy its own pelican perch. The Ted Smout bridge certainly can.

I pay tribute to the 700 workers who built this breathtaking piece of infrastructure. To give the committee some statistics, 12,000 tonnes of concrete and 10,000 tonnes of steel went into Australia's longest bridge. It has a 4.5-metre wide pedestrian-cycle path and a purpose-built fishing platform. I think that will be very well used by the bayside community. The fishing in the area is very good, and some of the construction workers who built that fishing platform have already caught a couple of fish from it.

The Ted Smout bridge will link the Houghton Highway bridge to form two, three-lane one-way highways. That means we are doubling capacity, so if there is an incident on one of the bridges commuters will still be able to save around 20 minutes on their journey time. Bus travel times will also improve. Each bridge will have a dedicated T2 lane. With the Ted Smout Memorial Bridge now open, we can get to work on the old Houghton Highway and spruce it up with new asphalt and expansion joints for a smoother, more comfortable journey for road users. When that is finished by mid next year, there will be three lanes open in each direction, which means a big reduction in peak hour travel time between Redcliffe and Brighton.

We are going to demolish the old Hornibrook Bridge. That is sad, but it is something we have to do. It is all in the name of safety, and safety must come first. We will preserve as much of the old timber as we can and save the historic portals. Indeed, if you get a chance, I would suggest any committee member get down to our fishing platform on the new bridge where we have recycled some timber from across the state. That will show what we will do with some of that timber on the old Hornibrook Bridge. We will rebuild a section of the old bridge. It will be given a new lease of life as a fishing platform over Hays Inlet. The new Ted Smout Memorial Bridge is about building a better, brighter future for the entire bayside community.

Mr RYAN: I refer to SDS 2-116 and the issue of flood immunity. I ask the minister to advise the committee of the steps the government has taken to help people living and working in regional Queensland affected by severe flooding and road closures earlier this year.

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Morayfield for his question. The member for Hinchinbrook I know will certainly be aware of that flooding, as most people in regional and South-East Queensland would be. Those floods were bad this year. We had half the state under water at one stage. They were bad for our roads and bad for the communities that were affected. Floodwaters were at levels not seen in many decades. Indeed, in some sections of Western Queensland that I travelled to, they had never been seen before. They had a significant impact on road, rail and other transport infrastructure, but we swung into action straightaway. Our staff worked shoulder to shoulder with local governments, police and emergency service workers to keep communities and road users safe and connected.

My department brought key stakeholders together to carefully manage a saturated road network and help fast-track the recovery process. This was no small feat. Department staff, some of whom were personally affected themselves, worked long and hard to get roads open and trafficable. As part of the recovery process, my department is now getting on with the job and making long-term repairs to the road network through natural disaster relief and recovery arrangements. We have submitted emergency relief claims of more than \$200 million for the state controlled road network, with more to come.

We acted swiftly to repair damaged roads as soon as possible and investigate flood immunity issues. For example, in the south-west region my department has hydraulics people on the ground investigating the flooding that occurred at Eromanga in the Quilpie shire. A planned project is being undertaken to look at options to improve flood immunity on the Bulloo Development Road at the Paroo River crossing. We are working with communities and industry across Central Queensland to identify future flood immunity improvements for the region.

In the Central Highlands and the Banana shire, emergency flood damage repairs have been completed and the road network reopened with some heavy vehicle restrictions remaining in place on some unsealed roads. Even though we are in the dry season, some of those unsealed roads still have a saturated base and we need to be really careful. Around the Rolleston area, which was heavily affected by flooding, engineers are finalising assessments for long-term restoration works with submissions to be provided to Emergency Management Queensland in the near future. Main Roads is focused on funding submissions for projects to reduce the length of flood closures on remote community roads such as the Wills, Gulf and Burke development roads. They are looking at floodway upgrades, culvert replacements and widening and sealing projects on gravel sections of those roads.

Once completed, these projects will improve flood immunity for the Burketown, Doomadgee, Gregory, Normanton and Karumba communities. In the Far North, RoadTek crews have carried out emergency repairs on the largely gravel Peninsula Developmental Road. I really have to thank the RoadTek workers. They have been our workforce in regional Queensland responding to that particular emergency.

Ms MALE: The Bligh government is very careful about balancing the needs of South-East Queensland with regional requirements. I ask the minister to advise what steps are being taken to boost regional economies and build a stronger road network, with particular reference to west of the Great Divide?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for her question. She certainly knows the needs of regional Queensland. I think she has some family up at Giru, so she certainly knows the needs of people in North Queensland.

As the saying goes, 'Go west, young man.' That fits in well with our new roads budget. Looking at Western Queensland, we are building better roads and generating more jobs to boot. We have 12,000 men and women hard at work on our roads right across regional Queensland. Let us head out west as we continue our road journey, because this government cares about the bush—all things west of the Great Divide and beyond the black stump.

That is why we are rolling out almost half a billion dollars on road projects in Western Queensland. As I said earlier, I went on a road trip last week and now it is time for another one. Let us hit the highway. There is \$10 million to widen the 23 kilometres of the Gregory Developmental Road between Charters Towers and The Lynd. I saw this work firsthand last Wednesday. Make no mistake, our road crews are hard at work west of the Great Divide.

We are also spending \$700,000 on a new heavy vehicle rest stop on the Gregory. That will be welcomed by not only heavy vehicle drivers who use that road but also the increasing number of grey nomads who choose to spend their holidays in North Queensland. Back on the road. There is \$30 million to seal sections of the Roma-Taroom Road, delivering an all-weather link to support the booming Surat Basin, the oil and gas industry and the livestock industry.

More than \$15 million is being spent on the Diamantina Developmental Road between Charleville and Quilpie. There is \$6 million to widen and strengthen the Capricorn Highway between Duaringa and Emerald. There is \$10 million to kick off a \$17 million project to widen parts of the Eidsvold-Theodore Road. There is more than \$8 million to widen a section of the New England Highway south of Crows Nest.

Not only are we building better roads; we are delivering jobs for people in regional Queensland, kick-starting local economies, paving the roads and paving the way for a better future for regional Queenslanders. This is good news for the people in regional Queensland and good news for people west of the Great Divide. In regional Queensland we rely on our roads much more than people in built-up city areas. They are our lifeblood. That is why I am proud of this budget in Western Queensland.

CHAIR: I refer to Safer Roads Sooner and particularly the SDS at page 2-116. It does refer to funding initiatives to make our roads safer for motorists. I have a keen interest in this. Can the minister please outline to the committee the sorts of initiatives that will be funded through the \$66 million set aside for Safer Roads Sooner?

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is a very good question and one that is pertinent to this committee. As I said earlier, I returned from a trip last week to regional Queensland. I talked about Safer Roads Sooner initiatives—\$66 million of money well spent. I went to Rocky, Gladstone, Emerald, Charters Towers, Cairns and Mackay. I would have made it to Dysart and Moranbah but it started to rain and we could not land so we had to keep going.

Our Safer Roads Sooner funding package is about spending money where it will make the greatest difference. In this case we are targeting traffic hot spots across Queensland. These projects will go a long way toward making our road network safer and more secure for motorists. There are few things more important than road safety. That is why these projects are so important. While we are building better roads and maintaining the ones we have got, we are providing much needed jobs for local workers in road construction and road maintenance. That is significant and comes at a time when jobs and job security are really so important.

Hitting the road: this is what we are doing in Brisbane and Ipswich. There are traffic signals on the Gateway Motorway North on- and off-ramps between Links Avenue and Cullen Avenue worth \$1 million. On the north coast we will put wire rope barriers on both sides of the centre median on the Bruce Highway south of the Caloundra interchange worth more than \$2.8 million. On the south coast we will put safety barriers at a number of sites on the Pacific Motorway worth more than \$3.5 million. On the Darling Downs there are projects to widen and seal shoulders on the Warrego Highway east of Warra worth \$4 million. In the south-west there will be the widening and sealing of shoulders and the removal of roadside hazards on the Warrego Highway west of Jackson worth \$660,000.

In the Wide Bay-Burnett there will be curve widening and sealing on Goodwood Road in Bundaberg worth half a million dollars. In the Fitzroy there will be an overtaking lane on the Capricorn Highway between Bluff and Dingo worth \$2.5 million. In the Mackay-Whitsundays there will be a safety overhaul on the Peak Downs Highway, including the project I talked about earlier at the Horse and Jockey Road intersection, plus a realignment of traffic lanes in Walkerston worth \$4.5 million.

In the central west there will be safety improvements on the Blackall Jericho Road worth \$750,000. In the best part of Queensland, the north, there will be two pedestrian refuges including signage on Boundary Street in Townsville worth \$120,000. In the Far North there will be new line markings and the removal of roadside hazards on the Kennedy Highway worth \$2 million. There will be paving and sealing on the Wills Developmental Road between Doomadgee and Burketown in the north-west at a cost of \$2 million.

We are talking about \$66 million for Safer Roads Sooner. On top of our road safety budget, it means jobs for local roadworkers right across our state. It is a win for roadworkers and it is a win for road safety.

CHAIR: The time allocated for questions from government members has expired. I will proceed with non-government questions. I call the member for Maroochydhore.

Ms SIMPSON: I asked you a question on notice with regard to significant hikes in tolls for the motorways and whether the department and the minister received any briefings, reports or advice, before and after the decision to hike tolls, about the potential for vehicle drivers, particularly trucks, to use other roads to avoid the tolls. I asked the minister for this advice. The minister did not answer that. Did your department seek or have any briefings about the potential impact of people rat-running due to high hikes in tolls on the motorways?

Mr WALLACE: Again, I refer to my response, member for Maroochydhore. I just had a chat to my director-general and my associate director-general and they are not aware of any advice. But great success stories are our Logan and Gateway motorways. Indeed, I was just speaking this morning to the CEO of Queensland Motorways, Phil Mumford. It looks, year on year, like we have had about a five per cent increase in traffic across those motorways. That is good news. It shows that people are using our network well.

But these toll changes are paying for important infrastructure rollout on our motorways. They are increasing to pay for things like free-flow tolling. Let me talk about free-flow tolling and the impact that has had on our network. The member for Maroochydhore, a bit like in her Chicken Little state, said that this was going to be terrible and horrible. But what has free-flow tolling done across our network? It has improved travel time for people travelling across the network. No longer do people have to stop at a toll booth, work out how much they have to pay, fiddle for change, get the change into the little bucket, wait for the arm to open and then keep going. People go through now. That is saving travel time. It is around 10 minutes 30 seconds on a southbound journey in the morning. That is due to free-flow tolling.

Importantly, the other thing that free-flow tolling has done—and do not forget that these toll increases are paying for things like free-flow tolling—is improve the safety on those motorways. When people were looking for their change and when they were working out which lane to get into to pay their toll they made mistakes. Those toll booth sites were the scene, unfortunately, of a number of accidents. Since the introduction of free-flow tolling and the removal of those toll booths we have not had a recorded accident at that site. That is good news for motorists who use that network.

That is why we have increased tolls. It is not only to pay for new infrastructure like the Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge but also to introduce free-flow tolling. It gives motorists a quicker but safer travel time. As I said, Mr Mumford has just told me that, year on year, it looks as though we have had about a five per cent increase in vehicles using the network.

The Friday of the Queen's birthday long weekend saw a record number of vehicles travelling our network. Over 280,000 vehicles were on that network. It shows that people have responded to free-flow tolling. It shows that people have responded to our new infrastructure that we are rolling out. We have increased tolls to pay for that infrastructure and to pay for free-flow tolling.

Ms SIMPSON: We note that there was a significant hike in tolls from 1 July. This was about sweetening the sale of Queensland Motorways and souring the price for motorists. I ask the minister again: did you do any checking on what this hike in tolls would mean with regard to the impact on other roads? Surely a department looks at what the overall network impact would be, let alone what the price sensitivity would be, and puts some road counters out. Did the minister ask those questions when he signed off and said, 'Yes, I'm going to agree to whacking up the tolls.'?

Mr WALLACE: The premise of the member's question is absolutely wrong, and she knows that. The Chicken Little of Queensland politics is at her game again. These tolls were not increased to fatten the deal for the sale of QML. That is absolutely wrong and I reject that assertion 100 per cent. These tolls have been increased to pay for the infrastructure that people are responding to in droves.

Ms SIMPSON: Nobody believes you, Minister.

Mr WALLACE: I will not sit here and listen to that incorrect information. What are these tolls doing? They are contributing towards the cost of upgrading the Gateway Motorway between Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road and the Pacific Motorway and also upgrading the Port of Brisbane Motorway. The changes in tolls at the Murarrie toll point adjacent to the Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge mean \$3.85 for a private car. Compare that to other toll roads in Queensland and it is very good value for Queensland motorists.

It is also paying for around \$500 million in new upgrades along that network—upgrades to the southern end of the Gateway Motorway. There is \$240 million for the extension of the Gateway Upgrade Project contract to include upgrades between Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road and the Pacific Motorway and a contribution of funding for the extension of the Port of Brisbane Motorway worth \$332 million. That is why we have increased tolls—to roll out better infrastructure, to improve travel time and to keep people safe. Not only are we paying for the free-flow tolling with that; we are also paying for that extension. It means more jobs—around 600 jobs—on those projects.

Lets us talk about the Gateway and what we have done. Six thousand men and women worked on that project. That is what we are paying for. The Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge is what we are paying for. Free-flow tolling is what we are paying for. Some 11,600 tonnes of steel is what we are paying for. Some 445,000 cubic metres of concrete is what we are paying for. Some 9,000 tonnes of asphalt is what we are paying for. We are paying so that we can get people across our system faster. We are paying so that we can keep people safer on our roads. That is what we are paying for. That is why we have increased tolls.

But compare our tolls across our system and you will find that, compared to just about any other toll road in Australia, the people who use our Logan and Gateway motorways are getting great value for money. I will defend what we are doing there because anyone who has used that system knows that, before we undertook this, it was prone to congestion. We are tackling that head-on.

Ms SIMPSON: Seeing you are so keen on high tolls and charges, I remind you with regard to Connecting SEQ 2031 and your responsibilities with integrated transport that the draft document did show distance based tolling and a range of other charges. Where is this final document? Will you guarantee there will be no more road charges? We have already seen the highest road charges in Australia under your government.

Mr WALLACE: Minister Nolan has carriage of that document so you should have asked that question yesterday, member for Maroochydore.

Ms SIMPSON: I refer to the sheet that I was supplied which shows you are also responsible for integrated transport planning.

Mr WALLACE: Let us talk about congestion based tolling.

Ms SIMPSON: I table that document.

Mr WALLACE: There is only one party that has proposed congestion based tolling in their planning documents and that is the member for Maroochydore's party. This is the smoking gun. Despite me calling on the opposition to rule it out in parliament, they refuse to rule out congestion based tolling that is contained in their document. Their document shows that they will—

Ms SIMPSON: That is a bit rich!

Mr WALLACE: Madam Chair, their document shows—

Ms SIMPSON: We caught you out with a draft document you did not want to show people.

CHAIR: Order! The minister has the floor. Please, Minister, proceed.

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Their official document—

Ms SIMPSON: We caught you out, Minister. Where is your final document? Why is it hidden?

CHAIR: Order!

Mr WALLACE: I do not know where the member for Maroochydore went to school, Madam Chair, but I tell you what: I was educated properly. This document—

CHAIR: The minister has—

Ms SIMPSON: I went to the same school as your director-general, by the way.

CHAIR: Order! The minister has a right to answer the question without interruptions. Please, Minister.

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, Madam Chair. This document is the smoking gun. It shows that that side of politics wants to introduce congestion based charging. They refuse to rule it out. I have ruled it out three times today. We have not heard a pip from those opposite about ruling it out. We have ruled it out; they refuse to. The people of Queensland should be scared of the opposition should it win power, because it is still in its documents and it has refused to rule it out. I say to the people of North Queensland in my electorate who have to travel a lot further: if the opposition gets into power, expect

distance based tolling. Those in my electorate have to drive a lot further for services than people in South-East Queensland. I know that people, for instance, in Home Hill who have to see a specialist in Townsville have to travel 100 kilometres there and 100 kilometres back. Under the opposition's plans, they will be charged for every kilometre that they drive.

Ms SIMPSON: What plans? Where is your plan?

Mr WALLACE: That is your plan. That is the opposition plan—

Ms SIMPSON: No, we have caught you out. Where is your plan?

CHAIR: Order!

Mr WALLACE: I challenge the opposition again—

Ms SIMPSON: What bottom drawer are you hiding it in until after the federal election?

Mr WALLACE:—to rule it out. I challenge the opposition to rule it out. It has refused to.

Ms SIMPSON: Of course we have ruled it out. You were not listening.

Mr WALLACE: I have done it in parliament. I have done it here again today. The Premier has done it and the Treasurer has done it.

Ms SIMPSON: Where is your plan?

Mr WALLACE: We have ruled it out, and I tell you what: it is up to the opposition—

Ms SIMPSON: And other road charges?

CHAIR: Order! You have asked your question.

Mr WALLACE: I challenge the opposition again today to rule out congestion charging.

Ms SIMPSON: How many times?

Mr WALLACE: It has it in this document. Go and rule it out. We have done it!

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, I remind you of your responsibilities as supplied to me as a committee member which clearly shows integrated transport planning. Both you and your other minister are responsible for integrated transport planning. When will this document come forward? Will there be other road charges in this document?

Mr WALLACE: As I have said before, we have ruled out congestion based charging and distance based tolling.

Ms SIMPSON: So there will be some other charges?

Mr WALLACE: We have ruled that out. The 2031 Integrated Regional Transport Plan for Queensland aims to address challenges for our region. The document is a thorough document—a document that our department is looking at very closely and, as I said, the Minister for Transport has carriage over that document. But the draft Connecting SEQ 2031 details the transport strategy for the future which supports the achievement of key transport policy goals in South-East Queensland. The draft Connecting SEQ 2031 details the network strategies for public transport, the strategic road network, active transport and freight networks to support a shift to sustainable modes of transport and support the intentions of the SEQRP for delivering interconnected and compact communities.

It is an important document, a document which my department takes seriously. That is why when it is released I think it will be a document to base the future growth of our future road, rail and transport networks on in Queensland. But that is not the only document that we are looking at for road planning across the state. We now have a great Department of Transport and Main Roads that is doing transport studies right across the state. Apart from SEQ 2031 here in South-East Queensland, in Cairns we have a great plan which we released to the community last week for growth in that area. Earlier I talked about the Surat Basin transport study. Right across the state we are overseeing around 170 strategic transport planning studies—and that shows that we are not only focusing on South-East Queensland, and I note again that we have ruled out congestion charging but the opposition is mute—valued at more than \$66 million.

As at 31 June 2010, 96 per cent of the budget was underway or completed within budget. Some of the key studies which my department is looking at apart from SEQ 2031 are the Cross River Rail project, the Northern Busway, the Galilee Basin network study, the Surat Basin study and the Darling Downs and Cairns transit network study in Far North Queensland. We are looking at things like bikeway networks, busway networks, the Australia TradeCoast network, the Moreton Integrated Transport Study, the southern—

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, it is my understanding that your department, in the process of planning and costing projects, assigns a P rating to projects which indicates the certainty that the cost of the project will not exceed its estimate. Minister, can you confirm how many of the road projects listed in SEQIPP either do not have a P rating or have a very low certainty P rating?

Mr WALLACE: We do have a P rating for our road projects right across the state. Indeed, P90 is the estimate that we work up for projects across the state—that is, a 90 per cent certainty that that will be, if you like, the budget and the outcome that will be delivered. In terms of planning a road project—and let us take, for instance, our Cardwell Range project in the member for Hinchinbrook's electorate—we look at it closely. We developed a P90 estimate which we then used in our business case for funding to the federal government. Those estimates are very important in developing our plans and also seeking that funding. The member for Maroochydore talks about other P ratings. They are done, if you like, in the lead-up to a planning exercise. It can be very expensive to ascertain a P90 rating, especially on a project that may not stack up. Before we commit to a P90 rating on a project, we will go through a number of steps and develop other P ratings. Director-General Stewart, would you have a clue of the cost of a P90 rating for, say, a \$100 million project like the Cardwell Range?

Mr Stewart: Yes, the development of estimates is quite a complex issue. The more you go into the detail, particularly around probability of outcome, the more information you need. We will need comprehensive geotechnical investigations, pavement reports and geometric design. As the minister said, in terms of the development of these sorts of projects worth \$100 million, we would spend up to nearly \$10 million in the detailed feasibility of a study like that. So it is really important that we get into that detail. We already know how important geotechnics is in the outcome of projects and to understand the geology and the pavements, and those requirements are a very important thing. We have a lot of technical experts in our department who move forward in that area, but getting the answer right is a good thing. We pride ourselves on the work that we have done as a department in improving and implementing our estimates. We have actually learnt around cost escalation, so we really are focused on making sure our estimates are right.

Mr WALLACE: Let us take the opening of a project like the Ted Smout bridge. At the beginning of the exercise our estimate was \$315 million. We have delivered on the knocker, and you do not do that unless you have really good management. You do not do that unless you get your estimates right. It is something that we do right across the state on big, massive projects. Sometimes you can—

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, the quote I heard was that it is too expensive to do P ratings on projects that may not stack up, and I ask: does that mean that projects in SEQIPP that do not have P ratings are empty promises?

Mr WALLACE: No. We have thousands of projects across the state. Indeed, I think we have got about 10,000 projects underway at the moment. I constantly get people from the community saying, 'Can you build a road here, Minister?' or 'Can you build a road there, Minister?' I do not want my people spending hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars looking at a road that does not stack up. I really do not.

Ms SIMPSON: How many in SEQIPP do not have P ratings?

Mr WALLACE: Madam Chair!

CHAIR: You have asked your question.

Mr WALLACE: Before we develop these P ratings, we have to make sure a project will stack up, because quite frankly I am sure every member of parliament here gets letters from constituents asking for roads to be built which quite frankly may not have the time dedicated and moneys dedicated that they should have. But SEQIPP is a good program for South-East Queensland and a good program for my department. Over the next four years \$8.5 billion of road infrastructure projects will be delivered through SEQIPP, generating around 57,000 jobs. These works will target congestion relief and provide an efficient transport network in South-East Queensland. State investment on road projects over the four years totals around \$2 billion, with the remainder of works funded by the federal government and private funding sources. Investment comprises 60 road infrastructure projects in the next four years, including the provision of high-occupancy vehicle lanes, intelligent transport systems, network investigations and corridor preservation.

Importantly, we have to remember that SEQIPP is a long-term planning document, and the government constantly updates that. I turn the committee's attention to page 19 of SEQIPP. With regard to cost estimates used in this SEQIPP infrastructure plan, it says that all cost estimates provided in the SEQ infrastructure plan represent the best information available at present. For instance, in terms of the western corridor and Toowoomba transport projects at page 30, you can see there the estimate category and it has the way that those particular works are estimated. But before we get into a project, we want to know it is going to stack up. We do our costings properly, and that is why we can deliver things like Ted Smout on time and on budget when we said we would.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The question time for non-government members has expired. I call the member for Morayfield.

Mr RYAN: In asking my question about road network maintenance, Minister, I want to first join with you in acknowledging the good work of RoadTek staff, especially in the Morayfield state electorate. I refer to the SDS at page 2-115 and the need to protect our road assets for future generations, and I ask the minister to provide an overview of what is involved in maintaining the state's road network and the number of jobs generated out of this vital maintenance work.

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, member for Morayfield. That is a good question. A young bloke like you will be wanting to see those roads around for years to come, as will our future generations. We have a \$3.3 billion roads budget this year. As I said, that is three times bigger than what the Tories ever provided. Our roads budget will build better roads right across our state. It is a roads budget for growth. It is a roads budget that will deliver jobs for Queenslanders—around 30,000 jobs this year. Our roadworkers have got their hard hats on from right up the tip down to Coolangatta, and we are delivering out west of the Great Divide too.

We had a plan, and I will talk about that again. We had a plan. We stuck to it. We made the tough choices—unlike the opposition, who are job blockers and job knockers. You have got the Leader of the Opposition out there talking about the freeze on infrastructure, a freeze on projects, a freeze on jobs. He would give Queenslanders the cold shoulder. Our \$18 billion road-building program is kick-starting local economies. It is generating jobs—around 30,000 of them. We need to compare that to the Leader of the Opposition's plan—'Mr Three Per Cent Cut'. His plan for roads would be a disaster. Millions would go down the drain and hundreds of jobs down the gurgler. He is saying one thing and his colleagues are saying another. They just agree to disagree.

After the budget they popped up like a jack-in-the-box one after the other wanting more money for roads. Let us take the opposition spokesperson here. She says that we are not spending enough. You have the Leader of the Opposition with the right-hand blinker on and his roads spokesman with the left-hand blinker on, and you know what that means for the people of Queensland: the hazard lights are on. They showed their true colours—no policies, just a load of populist claptrap. They have not got a clue. Even their Tory colleagues in New South Wales have switched on to the fact that infrastructure builds stronger economies. We will not take our foot off the pedal when it comes to Queensland. We believe in better roads. We believe in jobs. We maintain the largest state controlled road network in the country—from here to New York and back again, so let's start spreading the news.

In this year's budget we are about to receive a \$758 million injection to maintain our first-rate road network: \$200 million for routine maintenance, \$140 million for pavement resurfacing, more than \$170 million for pavement rehabilitation, \$9 million for environmental maintenance, \$60 million for road safety related maintenance and minor works, \$50 million for traffic operations and maintenance of our facilities and around \$130 million for NDRA arrangement works right across regional Queensland. But roads do much more than connect Queensland communities; they deliver jobs for local roadworkers and those jobs come at a time when jobs and job security are so important.

Mr WELLS: This question is about page 2-114 of the SDS. After my constituents drive across the \$315 million on-time, on-budget Ted Smout bridge, very shortly afterwards they find themselves on the Gateway Motorway. A little way down the road of the Gateway Motorway there is a division in the road and there is an Old Gateway Motorway and there is the Gateway Motorway. First-time users or occasional users of the road can find this a little bit confusing. I was wondering, for navigational purposes and for keeping up with the times, if the minister had considered a change of name to the Old Gateway Motorway?

Mr WALLACE: Can I thank the member for Murrumba for the question. Yes, we have, member for Murrumba, you will be pleased to know. In fact, I am delighted to announce here today a competition to rename the Old Gateway Motorway to stop that confusion. We have listened to the community over the years when it comes to naming bridges and roads. Indeed, we did that with our Q150 celebrations and, more recently, with the Ted Smout Memorial Bridge, which, as the member for Murrumba knows, was named after our longest living digger and someone who I know received such great applause on Sunday at that bridge opening. I do not think we could have had a better name than the Ted Smout Memorial Bridge.

So we have to turn our attention now to renaming the Old Gateway Motorway. It is a significant motorway and the new name will help set the motorway apart from the new Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge. So today we will kick off the competition and leave it open for about a month. I encourage members in that neck of the woods to maybe consult with their communities to come up with some names that would be great for that Old Gateway Motorway. We are looking for suggestions that are significant to the local community—names that might honour pioneers, local heroes, sporting heroes, local flora and fauna. Basically, the sky is the limit. I know one of our local FM radio stations is leading the push to name one of our roads after the broadcaster George Negus, a former Brisbane boy. Now it is the chance for the community to have its say. We will form a small panel to come up with a short list and from there we will choose a name for the Old Gateway Motorway, member for Murrumba. So maybe you can help lead the charge in your neck of the woods.

Ms MALE: The minister has spoken extensively this morning about job creation and the number of jobs that are done by Main Roads workers across the state. My question, therefore, relates to the safety of those roadworkers. I refer to page 2-116 of the SDS and the revamped traffic and travel information website for motorists. I ask the minister to advise the committee what initiatives are in place to protect roadworkers who are out and about working on our roads and making them safer for motorists across Queensland.

Mr WALLACE: Madam Chair, that is a really important question and one that we should never forget about. We are rolling out a record \$18 billion program across the state. It is a hive of activity on our roads and anyone who drives along our roads will know all the work that is underway. I have to thank the workers who do that—the men and women of this state who are doing that work. They are out there in force. They are doing a great job.

As I said, I was out and about in regional Queensland last week and I saw them hard at work at Cairns, Emerald, Gladstone, Rockhampton, Mackay and Charters Towers. I take my hat off to them. They do a great job. The work they do is important but, more importantly, they deserve to come home safely at the end of their shift. That is why we have measures in place to make their job safer.

Our roadworker safety program is about raising awareness of safety issues around roadworks for both workers and motorists. There are a couple of things we do. There is our roadworker hotline. It allows roadworkers across the state to report incidents of dangerous driving in and around roadworks. The calls are reported to the police. Indeed, we have had some prosecutions as a result of that. We have our new TrailerCam, a trailer based CCTV camera system that is used to monitor motorists' behaviour around roadworks. We have a reversing camera system that delivers better rear vision for workers and thermal imaging—this is groundbreaking technology—an early warning system for operators of barrier trucks. You can actually see vehicles a number of kilometres away at night or if it is foggy to warn them of any dangers. We have our Safety Leadership Program being rolled out for all supervisors and managers and then there is a new Traffic Management Registration Scheme. It aims to clean up the traffic controller industry in Queensland. The registration scheme covers traffic management companies and it requires them to be licensed. I thank the traffic management companies who work with us. I thank the unions, especially the AWU, who worked with us to get this scheme up. It will help keep those men and women building our roads safe.

For motorists, we are rolling out a number of safety related campaigns. There are strategies that target motorcyclists and we have a number of road safety campaigns, including 'Wake up to the signs', 'Share my story' and 'Shifting gears'. These campaigns are intended to educate motorists about the need for heightened road safety around our roadworkers. They are doing a great job out there around the state and, like all of us, they need to work in a safe environment.

Mr WELLS: This is technically about page 2-113 of the SDS. I know that the minister is very well aware of my constituent Murray Goodrich, who tragically lost his life while directing traffic on the Bruce Highway upgrade. It would be appropriate to establish some kind of memorial for Murray Goodrich. I ask the minister: has he been able to give consideration to this matter and is he able to make an announcement of an appropriate memorial for Murray?

Mr WALLACE: That is quite a sad question, Madam Chair, but one that is very pertinent. I thank the member for his question. I would like to place on the record my thanks to both the member for Murrumba and the member for Morayfield for their advocacy on this issue. Murray Goodrich was a 48-year-old traffic controller from Deception Bay who died last year while directing traffic just south of the Uhlmann Road exit at Burpengary. It was a tragedy and it should not have happened. Murray was a well-liked and respected member of the Deception Bay community, a devoted husband and a proud father of triplet girls—young women who will never again see the loving smile of a proud father as they reach their life milestones. Murray's death is a tragic reminder of the need to be ever vigilant around roadworks—a tragic reminder.

I have asked my department to build a memorial plaque at the Jowarra Park rest area in memory of Murray Goodrich. Jowarra Park is a beautiful and serene site in the heart of the north coast region where Murray worked and raised his family. Let this site be a lasting tribute to Murray and one that his family can remember him by.

Nothing is more important than the safety of the men and women who work on our road network. They have a fundamental right to a safe working environment and a fundamental right to work and come home safely at the end of the day. Nothing is more important than that.

CHAIR: Hear, hear. Thank you, Minister.

Mr RYAN: Thank you, Minister, for those kind words you said about Murray and the work of your department in finding a suitable memorial. You would be very well aware of my advocacy in respect of road infrastructure in the Morayfield state electorate. I, therefore, refer to page 2-113 of the SDS and the department's aim to plan, deliver and manage a transport system that connects Queenslanders. I ask: can the minister outline the road benefits for the good folk of the Morayfield state electorate out of this year's budget?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Morayfield for his question. This might get a few fewer visits from you in my office in the coming months, member for Morayfield, but you are always welcome to come and tap me on the shoulder for a bit more. He is a great supporter of safer and more secure roads for his constituents, and good on him. In fact, he has bent my ear on a number of occasions, pushing for road upgrades in his electorate. So I am delighted to inform him that more than \$472,000 has been set aside out of the budget to widen and overlay a section of Raynbird Road between Roberts Road and the quarry entrance at Narangba. The widening work will make it safer for trucks to get in to and out of the local quarry, which is very difficult.

But there is more: \$555,000 in funding for concept planning on the Bruce Highway at the Boundary Road, Bribie Island Road, Pumicestone Road and Johnston Road interchanges. You will know how busy that road is and it is becoming even busier. I know the member for Pine Rivers is certainly aware of that. So that planning money is good news. That allows us to develop proposals and to seek funding from the federal government. That whole project will total around \$2 million over its lifetime. It is a busy section of road and it will only get busier. That is why we are planning now so that we can meet all the future growth in the Morayfield electorate.

With more than 2,000 people heading to Queensland every week, it is important to plan for the future—to build bigger and better roads. I am also delighted to inform the member that \$335,000 has been set aside for a new sealed two-lane section on Oakey Flat Road between Burpengary Creek and Raynbird Road at Burpengary. There is still more to come, member for Morayfield. You have a big smile on your face. There is an upgrade of Morayfield Road—one that you have championed since your election. This year, we have allocated \$4 million to get construction started. I am sure you would be pleased about that. That is about tackling congestion on this very, very busy road. That is good news for Morayfield motorists. It is also good news for those roadworkers. It will generate jobs—jobs in your community, jobs that will help put bread and butter on the table of those men and women who help build that great network across the state.

Ms MALE: I refer to page 2-114 of the SDS and the upgrade of the Bruce Highway between Cooroy and Curra. I ask the minister to provide a progress report to the committee on this important road safety upgrade.

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for that question. She would have driven that section of road a number of times and knows how important those works are. The roadworks, I am pleased to say, are signed, sealed and are being delivered right now. These roadworks are making a big difference to people's lives. We are rolling out \$18 billion in road infrastructure in Queensland, building a road network that is second to none, and that is about 30,000 jobs.

One of the priorities that we tackle, of course, is safety on our roads. We have reached a major milestone on the vital safety upgrade of the Bruce Highway between Cooroy and Curra. We have hit the halfway mark with earthworks, removing about 2.5 million cubic metres of earth from the site. It means that our roadworkers have literally moved heaven and earth to help deliver this important road safety project on time and on budget, using that P90 estimate. It is one of Queensland's highest priority road projects. We are planning to upgrade the entire 65-kilometre stretch of the highway.

On top of the road safety benefits, we are kick-starting the local economy, with local jobs for workers—around 1,700 jobs at that particular project and the majority have been filled by locals. It could not come at a better time, when we are fighting for every job in Queensland and fighting for the job security that goes with it. I have said it before and I will say it again: we have a vast network in Queensland—about the same as from Brisbane to London and back—and we are getting on with the job. The Bligh government is hard at work making it bigger and better. You can bet London to a brick on that.

We have made the tough decisions, but the right decisions to continue rolling out this infrastructure, unlike the opposition. They have not built a road in Queensland for donkey's years. Let me remind you of their plans for roads at the last election. They wanted to slash jobs on our roads. They wanted to slash jobs for roadworkers. If they got their way, they would have ripped up the bitumen, just like they ripped up the railway line on the Gold Coast and the Greenvale line up north. We are getting on with the job of building a safer and more secure road network for Queenslanders. Whilst we deliver, they dither.

Let us look at the safety improvements that we have already delivered on this vital link between Cooroy and Curra: \$100 million in safety treatments in recent years; variable message signs along the Bruce Highway—and the member for Pine Rivers would be aware of those—at Black Mountain, Federal, Coles Creek, Traveston and other key sites; speed reduction to 90 kilometre per hour between Cooroy and the Wide Bay Highway; the installation of a wire rope barrier in the median at Federal to make it safer for motorists—really important improvements—pavement strengthening and intersection improvements at Black Mountain-Pioneer Road; resurfacing and pavement repairs near Tandur Road; overtaking lanes near Traveston Road; and high visibility signs to boost driver awareness. We are getting on with the job of building better and safer roads for Queenslanders.

CHAIR: On that note I refer to page 2-116 of the SDS. I believe there is \$824 million spent on the Wacol to Darra section of the Ipswich Motorway. I ask the minister to provide a progress report on the motorway upgrade and to provide details of the number of jobs generated for local workers on this important project.

Mr WALLACE: Absolutely, Madam Chair. I am happy to report back to the committee. It has been completed early. It is an \$824 million project funded by the federal Labor government and it is all about easing congestion and improving safety for motorists along this busy section of motorway. It is on budget and it is delivered eight months ahead of schedule—great news.

In just two years we have delivered this major upgrade, all whilst keeping 100,000 vehicles moving safely and efficiently through the area every day of the week. When you go out to that particular site you can see the vehicles coming through—testament to the engineers and the roadworkers who got that job done. We have delivered this important upgrade and we have delivered jobs for local workers—5,000 jobs. We have rolled out training and employment programs for the local community. There were 54 people who completed their traineeships on the project. They gained skills to equip them for life in civil construction, road construction and maintenance, bridge construction and maintenance, plan reading and pipe laying. Not only have we delivered an \$824 million project early; we are also laying the skills for that next generation of road builders.

We had a dedicated trainee coordinator who worked tirelessly to ensure the trainees succeeded in their goals and were integrated into the wider project team. The project team set up a dedicated and supervised training area on the project where trainee operators could practise their skills in a more controlled environment. This way, they were able to gain confidence and experience away from the pressure of the project.

Motorists are already enjoying the benefits of a safe and smoother road network. Works will continue this month to complete the installation of our intelligent transport systems, or ITS. That is good news for motorists. It means Transport and Main Roads will be able to actively manage the motorway capacity and safety. That is important when you are dealing with one of the state's busiest road networks. It is about tackling congestion, delivering a safer, more secure network for motorists and providing more jobs.

I will talk about ITS for a moment. It is a really important platform that we are laying out across our road system across the state meaning that we can get better information for motorists.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Hold that thought. We will come back to that, I am sure. The time allocated for questions by government members has expired. The committee will adjourn for a break for morning tea and the hearing will resume at 11 am.

Proceedings suspended from 10.30 am to 11.00 am

CHAIR: The hearing of Estimates Committee D is resumed. The committee will now continue its examination of the portfolio of the Minister for Main Roads. The question before the committee is that the proposed expenditure be agreed to. Time is now allocated for non-government questions and I call the member for Maroochydore.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, will you and your department provide a list of the P ratings for the road projects in SEQIPP?

Mr WALLACE: As I said, SEQIPP is a very thorough document which talks about the projected funding and projected budgets, and I outlined those earlier. It is in the document itself so the member for Maroochydore may well want to refer to that particular document for those costings. In terms of SEQIPP, what are we doing? There is a big program again—

Ms SIMPSON: That is just the costings. That is not the P ratings, though, is it?

Mr WALLACE: A big program in South-East Queensland—a massive program in terms of SEQIPP. I will give a sample of some of the highlights to be delivered by the Bligh government over the next four years when it comes to SEQIPP. Madam Chair, you would be interested in that as you represent Brisbane Central itself. So, we will continue construction of the \$1.96 billion Ipswich Motorway Upgrade—an important project—Dinmore to Goodna. Works include upgrading eight kilometres of the Ipswich Motorway between Dinmore and Goodna to a minimum six lanes, as well as providing cycling facilities. Importantly, on all our new capital works across the state we provide those cycling facilities where we can. My director-general, being a very keen cyclist, is a great advocate of that. That will create an average of 4,245 jobs over the life of that particular project.

Already we have talked about another great SEQIPP project, the \$315 million Houghton Highway duplication, including construction of the new three-lane Ted Smout Memorial Bridge. The bridge is 2.7 kilometres long and Australia's longest bridge. It has a stormproof structure to withstand a one-in-2,000-year event. We designed that particular structure. In fact, we went back after the initial designs were done, following Hurricane Katrina, to have a look at that. Some people attacked us and said, 'Your budget has blown out in this project.' No, it has not. We redesigned it to make sure that if there was a big

cyclone or a big storm event the people of Redcliffe would always have access to the mainland. I know that the member for Murrumba, as a local, would appreciate that we have undertaken that particular piece of work. It also protects the existing bridge from large wave events.

Another big SEQIPP project was the \$422 million Pacific Motorway Upgrade between Springwood South and Daisy Hill. This project includes a major upgrade of the Loganlea Road interchange, including a new bridge overpass, signalised intersections and improved off-ramps.

The Department of Infrastructure and Planning has carriage of SEQIPP. We work very closely with them on the roads aspect. It is very important that we do that in, really, the fastest growing neck of the woods. Construction that I talked about earlier, another SEQIPP milestone—

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, I note that you have not provided a list of the P ratings of the road projects in SEQIPP and this relates to my next question. I refer to the fact that Queensland did very poorly out of Infrastructure Australia investment in the last round, with the majority of funding going to one cost blowout—the Ipswich Motorway. In light of the recent Infrastructure Australia report to COAG listing no projects in Queensland as ready to proceed or threshold and only 1½ as having real potential, will you admit that this poor performance is likely to be repeated?

Mr WALLACE: Again, that is the wrong question from the member for Maroochydore. We have had no cost blowout on the Ipswich Motorway—no cost blowout. That is absolutely incorrect. You are misleading the committee.

Ms SIMPSON: More than \$800 million.

Mr WALLACE: You are misleading the committee in that regard, member for Maroochydore.

Ms SIMPSON: More than \$800 million.

Mr WALLACE: We are delivering that project on time and on budget. It is a great project for the people of that western corridor. But we continue to ask for further funds from the federal government. As I said earlier, I want to congratulate the federal Labor government in Canberra which has doubled its road funding to Queensland. That has meant that we could get important projects underway, like in that Ipswich corridor, which was starved for funds under the previous conservative government. It means that we can get projects underway on the Pacific Motorway, like the one at Springwood that I just mentioned, and carry out works around Nerang as well on the Pacific Motorway. It means that, using funds from the federal government, we can continue works north of that Bribie Island intersection that we talked about earlier, that planning study. It means that we can get on with the Cooroy-Curra section of the Bruce Highway, one of the most dangerous sections of highway anywhere in Australia. That would not have happened without an injection of federal funds from the federal Labor government in Canberra.

It also means that we can continue planning exercises across the state in growth areas, like the planning exercise we are doing south of Rockhampton on that Yeppen Flood Plain. That flood plain is notorious. I remember being caught there as a kid in 1974 with Mum and Dad on a trip to Brisbane in the old 180B. It is still like that. It has not changed, because the former conservative government in Canberra did not care about regional Queenslanders and the roads. Thanks to the federal Labor government in Canberra we have actually got some money to plan what we can do to fix up that problem on that Yeppen Flood Plain. Going north to Mackay—a growth city, a city that is really powering growth in the Bowen Basin—again, there is more money from the federal government for planning studies there. We are looking at that congestion study at the moment. I know that Mayor Col Meng is a great advocate, as is Tim Mulherin, of a possible bypass of Mackay in that regard.

Let us travel north to my neck of the woods, Townsville: the \$190 million port access road and the \$110 million Douglas ring-road, thanks to the federal government in Canberra. Going further north to the electorate of Hinchinbrook, the \$115 million Cardwell Range project is a big project but a project that is needed to keep drivers safe. Going further north, there is \$150 million for that very busy Cairns southern corridor—\$150 million from the federal government in Canberra. So it is a fallacy for the member for Maroochydore to come into this place—

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, I note that you have not provided a listing of the P ratings for SEQIPP which has the likelihood of variations in costs. You have not addressed the issue that you have not got projects ready or at threshold in regard to federal funding. I move to the issue of maintenance. You claim that there had been an increase in maintenance allocated this year, but in fact your own budget papers, in appendix No. 5, show that it falls off by \$120 million. Minister, like the quarter of a billion dollars cut out of the overall budget, that is a reduction in price, not an increase; is it not?

Mr WALLACE: I again remind the committee, member for Maroochydore, that those costimates are in SEQIPP so get a copy and have a look. I love to talk about maintenance on our roads. As I have said before, and I will say it again, we have the largest state controlled road network in Australia—

33,500 kilometres, the equivalent of from here to London and back—so we are getting on with the job. We have 6,500 bridges and major culverts and a road asset valued at over \$54 billion. This year we have allocated an unprecedented \$700 million to our road maintenance program. Our record road maintenance budget will ensure that our roads remain safe and drivable.

Ms SIMPSON: That is a reduction, though, on last year.

Mr WALLACE: I talked earlier about how last year, because we were rolling out road maintenance budgets across the state, we have actually reduced the amount of payment that is above the optimal life span. What is more, the maintenance budget is supporting jobs across Queensland.

Ms SIMPSON: Point of order. The minister is misleading the committee. On page 5-48 it shows that maintenance was \$820 million. The figure that the minister is quoting is a \$120 million cut.

CHAIR: There is no point of order. Minister, please continue answering the question.

Mr WALLACE: Again, that shows poor research from the member for Maroochydore. We have increased non-NDRRA maintenance funding by \$90 million per annum from 2007-08 onwards.

Ms SIMPSON: It is not in that indicator.

Mr WALLACE: So over \$700 million when you consider our NDRRA and our maintenance budgets—big budgets across the state employing around 11,000 Queenslanders. Now, the job drivers in maintenance are really important to look at and I talked about them earlier. There are about 15.8 jobs for every million dollars we spend on maintenance on our roads in Queensland. Compare that to the figure which, from memory, was about 7.8 for the capital works expenditure that we have got. So this is a really important program of maintenance across the state. Many of those are in regional Queensland, where jobs are just so important. Indeed, some of the mayors I speak to in Western Queensland tell me that if it were not for the Main Roads budget that we give to them and that they work with many of their people would be out of work. So it is important that we continue that maintenance budget.

One of the programs, again, that I would like to talk about is that \$30 million that I have made available for western councils. Director-General Stewart, do you want to add a little bit about that program and what we have done to secure it with western councils?

Mr Stewart: I think one of the most important things was the process that we undertook. We talked to firstly the RAPAD group—that is, the Outback Regional Roads Group. Bruce Scott from Windorah leads that roads group. It is about the department working very closely with local government. The roads group actually developed a plan in association with the department. We looked at—

CHAIR: Thank you, Director-General. I call the member for Maroochydore.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, you are actually taking this indicator out of the ongoing budget papers, and it is listed in appendix 5-48 in regard to maintenance where maintenance is listed at 820. I would suggest, if you are wanting to be critical of what is not published, that in future you put into your indicators how much you intend to spend on maintenance with a breakdown. I ask you: why have you removed the indicator on page 5-48 from the budget in relation to maintenance spending?

Mr WALLACE: Right across the budget we are, if you like, changing the way that we report so that it can be more clear. I have got nothing to hide when it comes to maintenance because it is such a great program that we are rolling out.

Ms SIMPSON: It is not in the budget.

Mr WALLACE: I believe it is in the appendix. But it is a great program in terms of maintenance across the state. I really want to talk about what we are doing in terms of maintenance and what it is doing across the state. As I said, we have around 33,000 kilometres of roads in Queensland. It is the largest network in Australia and one that really deserves the attention of this government. In terms of those particular performance measures that the member for Maroochydore referred to, the state government's performance management framework is being progressively implemented. The framework no longer uses the concepts of outputs and performance measures that were previously used in the Service Delivery Statements. They are replaced with services and service standards. As I said, we have nothing to hide in Roads because we have a great record to tell Queenslanders.

All agencies, including the Department of Transport and Main Roads, reviewed service structures and service standards during the 2009-10 financial year. Approved changes are included in the 2010-11 Service Delivery Statements. This review has resulted in a reduced number of service standards appearing in the 2010 SDS. A total of 54 performance measures have been discontinued in the 2010-11 Service Delivery Statements as part of that review. The review included the discontinuation of two performance measures as these functions have been transferred to the Department of Infrastructure and Planning. Two of these discontinued performance measures, shown under the output name 'Integrated Transport Planning', are the number of development applications assessed under the department's Integrated Planning Act 1997 concurrence powers, and the percentage of development applications assessed within Integrated Planning Act time frames.

It is important to add that the agency's discontinued output performance measures are included in appendix A, book 5 of the SDS. The department will continue to review its services and service standards annually. It is important to note that for the maintenance, preservation and operation of existing road assets the 2009-10 target was \$577 million and this year it is \$820 million. Mr Stewart, do you want to add to that?

Mr Stewart: I think the other thing we do in looking at our roadworks and asset management is that we go through a very detailed planning process. We understand our assets very clearly. We make sure that we look at the funding to actually match that asset type. We undertake huge numbers of inspections across our networks.

CHAIR: Sorry, Mr Stewart, your time has expired. Does the member want to extend his time?

Ms SIMPSON: I have a supplementary question. I will refer to the various notes in the SDS at pages 2-135 and 2-136. Minister, could you please clarify what the reduction in the NDRRA funding is for 2010-11 and what is the funding offset for the new Queensland driver's licence project? These have all been put together. They are amalgamated in here and there is not an actual breakdown.

Mr WALLACE: The member for Maroochydore questioned the transport minister yesterday about the new Queensland—

Ms SIMPSON: But it has your funding in there together with that measure. So that is why I need the explanation from the minister.

CHAIR: Just let the minister answer the question.

Mr WALLACE: The member for Maroochydore questioned the transport minister yesterday about the new Queensland driver's licence. She should have been asking those questions regarding that. In terms of NDRRA—

Ms SIMPSON: With respect, Minister, those two measures are actually combined. That is why I ask you the question.

CHAIR: Order! Member for Maroochydore. Minister, you have the call. Please answer the question.

Mr WALLACE: Again, poor research by the member for Maroochydore.

Ms SIMPSON: Have you read this?

Mr WALLACE: In terms of the NDRRA, we hope that we get a bit less flooding this year than last year. These are the estimates that we have in place. We have had two big years of rainfall events across Queensland. The member for Hinchinbrook will certainly know that Ingham has been affected worse than a lot of other communities across the state.

So what have we done in terms of NDRRA? We have got out there and tried to get roads open as quickly as possible, and those NDRRA funds are essential in doing that. Last Tuesday I was on the Gregory Development Road north of Charters Towers—a road that was severely damaged as a result of big rainfall events in the year before. I have driven that road a couple of times and the work we have done since then is absolutely magnificent. We could not do that without those NDRRA funds.

Let us look at some of the regions and what we have lodged in terms of funding for NDRRA: in the far-north region, \$106 million worth of damage; the northern region, \$11.5 million; the north coast—and it just goes to show that it is not just western and northern Queensland that has suffered—\$250,000; and in the south-west where we had those massive floods, \$107 million. Under the Commonwealth-state arrangement, my department can recoup a total of 75 per cent of the cost of restoration works for an event. We are expected to fund the balance—25 per cent—from existing funding allocations. We are doing that. We have done that. I give credit to my workers and councils who are out there fixing the flood damaged roads.

Here is a rainfall map across Queensland. It shows some of those big rainfall events. You can see that in and around Ingham there were big rainfall events and in south-west Queensland. I was at Roma with the mayor and the local member not long after the big flood went through there. We looked at some of that damage. It is essential that we get those NDRRA funds on the ground as quickly as possible to get that relief for local communities.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, I refer to the fact that the Toowoomba second range crossing is not even listed as a priority by Infrastructure Australia. This project was first identified as being needed in 1991—two decades ago—and is generally identified as one of Queensland's major road blocks. Minister, how much longer is the government going to prioritise sending fully laden cattle trucks through the middle of Toowoomba instead of getting on and completing the planning of this project?

CHAIR: Minister, you have about two minutes.

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Maroochydore for asking that question. One thing that I and the member for Toowoomba North have done is got mayors together from Toowoomba right out to Charleville in relation to the Warrego Highway. We have got them to together to fight for more funds for

the Warrego Highway. We have got them together to fight for more funds for projects like the second range crossing at Toowoomba. That has been needed. It has been needed for donkey's years. With the funds that we have got from the federal government, we are working to do a pilot tunnel to find out where we should put that route, but it will need money from Canberra to get it done.

The Tories sat there moot for over a decade while their mates were in power in Canberra and did nothing. Now they are piping up saying that we need the crossing. I agree; Kerry Shine agrees. That is why we got this meeting together of mayors from Toowoomba right out to Charleville to lobby for it. I will be saying to both sides of politics in the upcoming federal election, 'Stump up for the Warrego Highway. Stump up for projects like the second range crossing at Toowoomba.' It is a much needed piece of infrastructure in Queensland.

I said it earlier this morning and I will say it again: we have been chronically underfunded when it comes to the national road network in Queensland for 40 years. Quite frankly, the Tories in Canberra can hang their heads in shame when it comes to the neglect of Queensland's national road network for over a decade. The Warrego is a shining example of that. We say to Canberra that we want money for that second range crossing. But we also say to Canberra that we want further funds for the very busy Warrego Highway. It is a dangerous road. It needs more federal funding.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time allocated to questions by non-government members has expired. Minister, I refer to page 2-119 of the SDS and the department's objective to deliver world-class education and training, which I really support. Can the minister give a commitment to continue to provide places for trainees and apprentices on Queensland's vast road network?

Mr WALLACE: Absolutely, Madam Chair. They are our future. They are our future roadworkers. If I have anything to do with it, we will continue to train good men and women across our state as we roll out our record \$18 billion roads program. Anyone who gets a job in building roads in Queensland and builds up their skills, if we have anything to do with it on this side of the House, will be on the road to a successful career in road construction. More than 80 trainees and apprentices are currently employed by Main Roads in Queensland. We have trainee and apprentice fitters, electricians and construction workers on road building sites right across our great state. They are playing an important role helping to connect Queensland communities. We are rolling out a massive \$18 billion road building program across the state, and that is a win for our roads and a win for workers. I cannot stress enough that this comes at a time when jobs are so important and we need to get those skills up. We are going to have another boom in Queensland. That is happening. We have to have the skilled workers so that we can continue our program.

Our \$18 billion road program translates into around 30,000 jobs for Queenslanders each year. My department has importantly opened up job opportunities for Indigenous trainees and apprentices in road construction. That is a real feather in our cap. Last year we provided on-the-job training for around 70 Indigenous trainees in Cape York and the Torres Strait. They have used those skills to work on infrastructure projects in their own communities, including sealing around 40 kilometres of road. Here in South-East Queensland we have our 'constructive mob', which is delivering opportunities for Indigenous workers in the construction industry. The Bligh government looks after all Queenslanders and will continue to reach out to give people a helping hand to get the skills and education they need to secure a job and get ahead in life.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. That is great. I call the member for Morayfield.

Mr RYAN: Minister, one day I hope to be a grey nomad. Counting the number of grey hairs on my head, I hope it is sooner rather than later. So it is with a bit of interest that I refer you to page 2-118 of the SDS and the government's ambitions to create a diverse economy powered by bright ideas. What steps is Main Roads taking to encourage more grey nomads to hit the state's highways so that their tourist dollars help stimulate local economies.

Mr WALLACE: I had better take the member for Hinchinbrook's interjection that I wish I had some more hair. I might be a bald nomad. Grey nomads are a welcome sight on the Barkly Highway, the Matilda Highway and other highways out west. The roads out west are open for business and we are doing everything to encourage tourists to venture out on to western roads. I have two words to say to the member about attracting more grey nomads to spend their tourist dollars out west: dump points, special disposal spots for travellers to empty toilet wastes from their motorhomes, caravans and boats. With dump points, grey nomads and other road users are able to visit places off the beaten track knowing that they have somewhere safe and secure to dispose of their waste. It is really important to dispose of that waste wisely and safely.

CHAIR: It is.

Mr WALLACE: We have worked closely with the Campervan and Motorhome Club and local councils to come up with the best places for dump points. The member for Mount Isa, Betty Kiernan, has taken up the cause, asking travellers in her vast electorate to come up with suggestions. Last week when I was out west inspecting roads I met the Mayor of the Central Highlands Regional Council, Peter Maguire. What did he ask for? Dump points. I was happy to take his request on board and we are looking at a new dump point for Blackwater.

Over the past two years we have built 22 dump points. We have put them in Charleville, Coen, Daringa, Rockhampton, Tambo, Warwick and Yeppoon. We are about to roll them out in Aramac, Atherton, Augathella, Betoota, Chillagoe, Einasleigh, Jundah, Morven and Muttaborra. Mark my words, Madam Chair: dump points will help put these towns on the map. More dump points mean more grey nomads and more tourist dollars being spent in towns out west. They are a boon for travellers and that is why we are going to spend \$50,000 a year for the next three years to roll out even more of them. All up, we are going to install an extra 34 dump points around Queensland in the next three years. We have hit the trifecta with dump points: they are a win for travellers, a win for tourism and a win for the environment.

CHAIR: I call the member for Murrumba.

Mr WELLS: I disclose that I have no tendency whatsoever to nomadism of any variety. I refer to page 2-114 of the SDS, which does, however, highlight the importance of roads to people who are peripatetic, whether nomadic or settled. In particular, it raises the issue of the importance of main roads to regions and the importance of the department working closely with regional and remote councils in order to get the best outcome for the expenditure of the taxpayer's dollar. Could the minister please advise as to the manner in which his department works with local councils?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Murrumba for his question. He would have been across a few of those regional roads in his time in this place and certainly knows the importance of them for regional Queensland. To put this into perspective I would like to take you back to March this year when roads out west were badly damaged by some of the worst flooding in generations. Our road crews worked around the clock to repair these flood damaged roads. The damage bill reached \$250 million. Main Roads crews also lent a hand to two local councils to get their roads back in shape, because we want Queenslanders, no matter where they live, to have access to a safe and secure road network. That is so important.

That is why I am pleased to announce today again that we have set aside \$30 million to help maintain local roads of regional significance in Queensland. It means jobs for local roadworkers in the regions at a time when job security is so important. The \$30 million funding package will be managed through a roads alliance. That is a really important partnership with Main Roads, the Local Government Association of Queensland and local councils. It is about working together to achieve the best outcomes for Queensland communities.

We all share the same goal: to deliver a safe and reliable road network. When I was out west last week talking and listening to people who live and work out there and drive on those roads, it brought home to me once again the importance of a strong and reliable road network. But every cloud has a silver lining. When those flood damaged roads were open for business the region had another deluge. We spoke about them just before—the grey nomads. They hit the state's highways in their droves, keen to see our state and the west at its best. That is why this \$30 million program is important. It will help councils plan for the future. It will give them certainty. It will help them deliver better local roads. I thank the Outback Regional Road Group and councils for the role they played in seeking extra funding for their roads. They put together a submission seeking funding from the federal government based on regional priorities, not council boundaries. That goes to show what can be achieved when you work in partnership. Our \$30 million in extra funding is a win for motorists, a win for roadworkers and a win for regional Queensland communities.

Ms MALE: I refer to SDS page 2-113 and the government's commitment to involve stakeholders in the choices we make in relation to transport infrastructure. I ask the minister to provide details of how the government actually connects with the community on road safety projects.

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for her question. Safety is our No. 1 priority. Here is one that is fairly close to home for me in more ways than one. I am talking about the brand-new traffic lights in Home Hill, my home town. It was their first set of traffic lights, so can you imagine how important that was to the local community? The Home Hill *Observer*, the local rag, even had me on the front page. It is a wonderful picture. I might table that copy of the front page of the Home Hill *Observer* for the member for Hinchinbrook.

Leave granted.

Mr WALLACE: Let me tell you how we got there for these lights. Before I begin, can I say that the real heroes in this on that historic day were the community members who drove this project from the start. The Bligh government funded the \$800,000 project, and it was built by RoadTek workers, Main Roads workers. I want to pay tribute to them and the local community. Because of their determination and backing for this project, we now have a pedestrian crossing on busy Eighth Avenue. That is all about safety for people crossing the busy Bruce Highway. Main Roads consulted with the Burdekin Chamber of Commerce, the Burdekin Shire Council—and I want to thank Lyn McLaughlin, the local mayor—and a range of neighbourhood groups and associations to come up with the best possible solution. Together they looked at all the options and agreed that a signalised crossing was in the best interests of the community. It goes to show what can be achieved when everyone pulls together.

It was a historic day for Home Hill, and in years to come those who joined me will be able to say that they were there when Home Hill's first traffic lights were switched on. I will just digress a little bit: my great-grandfather, James Campbell Moffatt, was the first stationmaster and postmaster in Home Hill. I am sure if he was looking down from above he would be surprised to see a set of traffic lights in good old Home Hill.

CHAIR: I am sure he would.

Mr WALLACE: We also built a pedestrian refuge crossing on the western service road and two parking spaces for people with a disability. It was historic but it also was about road safety, and that always comes first in my book. The new traffic lights signal a new era for Home Hill and it is a safer way for locals and tourists to cross Home Hill's busiest street, the Bruce Highway. Last weekend, when I was in Townsville for the big V8 Supercars event, I visited the traffic management centre in Townsville and they were able to zoom in on the Home Hill traffic lights and show me people crossing that busy road in real time. It was the sum of all the parts for me and technology at its best.

Like all projects, my department remains committed to working with the community, business and industry to come up with solutions that are in everyone's best interests. In this case, Main Roads sat down and talked with the community, took their needs and concerns on board and consulted every step of the way.

CHAIR: I refer to SDS page 2-114 and projects to target Queensland's population growth demands. Bearing in mind that the Premier mooted at the Queensland Growth Management Summit that Townsville could become the state's second capital—

Mr CRIPPS: Cardwell.

CHAIR:—could the minister please advise what plans are in place to meet the future growth needs of motorists and road users in regional Queensland?

Mr WALLACE: I will take the member for Hinchinbrook's interjection again. He says Cardwell; I agree that they have got the best crab sandwiches in Australia. As I said earlier, I am a born and bred northerner and I back the Premier to the hilt. That is why I held another road summit for North Queensland mayors. Our focus is the 760-kilometre stretch of the Bruce Highway between Sarina and Cairns. It follows an effective partnership I struck with the mayors to secure additional funding for the Bruce Highway previously. It was a big win for the north. We secured more than \$1 billion to upgrade this vital stretch of the highway.

Let us talk about roads in North Queensland. Stage 1 of the Stuart Bypass has been delivered. All up, it was a \$190 million project signed, sealed and will be delivered once our port access road is completed. The new \$48 million Mulgrave River bridge was completed eight months ahead of schedule and is providing flood immunity for those North Queensland communities. Work has started on the \$115 million Cardwell Range realignment in the member for Hinchinbrook's electorate. Work has begun on the \$110 million Douglas Arterial duplication. I stood shoulder to shoulder with the federal transport minister, Anthony Albanese, last week and released plans for the southern access into Cairns. I have also handed him a copy of the mayors' wish list for our Bruce Highway.

We have made great progress on safety measures on the Bruce Highway—overtaking lanes, audible line markings and rest areas. All up, we have \$65 million for that program. It means thousands of jobs for local roadworkers, and it means a safe and secure road network to take the north well into the future. Townsville really is pulling its weight as our second capital.

We are getting on with the job of building better roads, not just in North Queensland but right across the state. We are investing in more than roads; we are investing in the mums and dads and families who live and work in regional Queensland by giving them a road network that is second to none.

Mr RYAN: Minister, I refer to SDS page 2-114 and the upgrade of the Bruce Highway between Ingham and Innisfail on the Cardwell Range. I ask the minister to provide a progress report on this vital upgrade. Again, how many jobs will be created for local workers carrying out this important safety initiative?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Morayfield for the question. I have talked about it before but let us talk about it again, because this is one that I am very passionate about. In fact, last week we had a couple of very serious accidents on the Cardwell Range. A B-double jackknifed at one stage. It just goes to show that this work cannot come soon enough. It is about road safety and it is about jobs, and it does not get much better than that for me.

The \$115 million Cardwell Range realignment is all about improving safety for motorists along this busy, winding stretch of the Bruce Highway. I know it like the back of my hand and I know how important it is for the safety upgrade for our local communities. Abigroup and Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation have been selected to design and deliver this project. We are talking about realigning a crucial stretch of the highway—a 4.2-kilometre section through some really tough winding roads, some tough hills, and also in the middle of a national park. Starting about 15 kilometres north of Ingham, it has had a higher than average accident rate and there is strong local support for getting something done about it.

This \$115 million project is another example of what the Nation Building Program is all about. It will generate jobs for about 300 Queenslanders, putting them to work modernising the road infrastructure vital to our long-term economic prosperity. The new alignment for the highway will be flatter and straighter and include climbing lanes for heavy vehicles and an overpass of the Rungoo rail crossing. I know that the member for Hinchinbrook will welcome that. A tragic accident occurred there a couple of years ago. Indeed, he will recall that the day that accident occurred we both flew together, as did the director-general, to get up there as quickly as possible.

These are all measures designed to improve safety along that section of the Bruce Highway. It is part of the unprecedented \$2.6 billion that the federal government is investing in the Bruce Highway, and it helps to make up for 11 years of neglect by the Howard government. Not only will this project boost road safety; it will generate jobs, and many of those jobs will be for local workers. It is a win for workers and a win for motorists. I have lost count of the number of times I have been on the range behind a heavy vehicle as it struggles up or down those steep hills. Once the upgrade is completed, motorists will have a smoother, more seamless journey up and down the range.

The upgrade will be carried out on the stretch of the highway that passes through the Girringun National Park. The project team will work hard to make sure the environment is protected while work is being carried out. We are investing in more than road infrastructure; we are investing in the people who live in, work in and visit our great region in North Queensland. We are investing in their future.

Mr WELLS: I have another bridge question, and the minister may be expecting me to ask a question about the Ted Smout bridge, which is better known in my constituency as the \$315 million on-time, on-budget Ted Smout bridge. However, just for variety, I will ask a question in relation to SDS page 2-104. How is the Forgan Bridge project in Mackay going? For that matter, how are bridge-building projects going across the state?

Mr WALLACE: This is another big project in Queensland—this time in regional Queensland, in Mackay. Someone said that it was named after William Forgan Smith but, no, it was actually named after his mother. So this was a great Premier of Queensland who named a bridge after his mother. I think that is a pretty good testament to the man.

CHAIR: It was just handy they had the same surname.

Mr WALLACE: Absolutely. The Bligh government is building bridges right across Queensland. By doing so, we are building a better, brighter future for all Queenslanders. As the member for Murrumba said, we joined the Premier at the official opening of the new \$315 million Ted Smout Memorial Bridge in the bayside linking Brisbane to Redcliffe. A month ago we had the official opening of the new Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge across the Brisbane River. More than 200,000 Queenslanders took up a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to walk the length of Queensland's newest and biggest bridge. Motorists are reaping the benefits now that four of those new lanes are open to traffic. These two projects have been big job generators for Queensland. All up, they have created almost 7,000 jobs for workers in road construction and related industries.

We are building bridges right across regional Queensland, too. There is the new \$148 million Forgan Bridge in Mackay—a state-of-the-art structure that spans the mighty Pioneer River. The first Forgan Bridge was built 72 years ago by another Labor Premier who was a great believer in capital works projects to drive the economy in tough economic times. The new Forgan Bridge generated more than 430 jobs and gave the local economy a kick-start. Another bridge-building project that I want to mention here is the new \$15 million bridge across the Endeavour River. It is a concrete bridge built to withstand another big wet season.

Can I just clarify our maintenance figures that we mentioned earlier for the benefit of the committee. The 2009-10 budget for maintenance and rehabilitation was \$577 million and the 2010-11 budget for maintenance is \$700 million, but maintenance and rehabilitation spending can differ when there are major events like floods. That is why the 2009-10 actual spend is \$820 million. That figure includes millions of dollars worth of NDRRA funding. However, it remains a fact that the \$700 million this year is the biggest budget. If there are severe weather events that damage the road network—and we hope this is not the case—that \$700 million figure will increase.

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

Mr McLINDON: Minister, as you are well aware, the Scenic Rim Regional Council and northern parts of Logan are certainly in dire need of your support from Main Roads. In relation to your visit to the Beaudesert electorate a couple of weeks ago—and I thank you very much for that; it was a champion effort—can you identify any funding allocations in this budget to address the necessity of a Beaudesert bypass road with the future development of Bromelton as well as the possibility of the feasibility of and construction of a Boonah-Kooralbyn connection road which the Kooralbyn community depend on for its economic viability, particularly given the Kooralbyn Resort closed its doors more than two years ago and the dangers present with a single-entry/exit community?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Beaudesert for his question. I sincerely thank him for his tour of the electorate to look at the issues in his electorate. I certainly got a better understanding of the needs of his growing community. I will break that down into two responses, if you do not mind.

In terms of the Beaudesert bypass, I am pleased to report to the committee today that I signed a letter yesterday to the mayor of Beaudesert pledging my department's support for that bypass. We will work with your local council on planning that bypass. They have agreed to do some community consultation to make sure we get the route right. The community are behind that and I think they will be. You know the number of heavy vehicles passing through there. It is certainly very much needed in that local community. Director-General Stewart was also at that particular meeting. I might ask him if he wants to add anything quickly in terms of our commitment to council and to your community.

Mr Stewart: It was an excellent meeting with the mayor of the Scenic Rim Regional Council and the council officers. I think there was a very clear agreement to move forward. I think one of the key things we have committed to is corridor preservation as well as design. It is a bit like some of the other work we do: we need to understand the scope of the project. The other good news was understanding their planning. They were able to show us their town planning requirements for the City of Beaudesert. I think their bypass proposal was not only relevant to that new town planning; it was also very useful to understand how many vehicles were moving through there.

The other thing I was quite surprised by at the briefing was the number of new quarries moving into that area. That was one of their key concerns around that really good economic production of hard rock. It was good to understand their needs. The mayor was very forceful in his presentation, but, again, he had a very compelling case for us to listen to and observe.

Mr WALLACE: In terms of that connection to Kooralbyn, I took your advice and I went and had a look at Kooralbyn after my visit to you. I can see that it is in desperate need of something to happen there. It is a bit sad, and I am sure you will acknowledge that with that resort closing. We will work to see what we can do to give that community a boost.

Whilst it would be a council road and the road in is a council road, we provide funds to councils in the form of our TIDS program. I strongly encourage the council to plan for that and to apply for it through TIDS funding for future works. Paul Noonan, who is my regional director, whom you would know well down there, has been tasked with that. Member for Beaudesert, if you want to drive that project, we will do what we can to give you that support.

Mr McLINDON: Minister, I refer to page 58 of the Budget Measures document in relation to the Safer Roads Sooner package, with a funding allocation of some \$33.5 million. Can you please outline which of Main Roads' 10 worst intersections received funding to alleviate the dangers present from these moneys?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Beaudesert for his question. Our \$66 million Safer Roads Sooner program is a great program across the state. I talked a little about that earlier. Whilst we have seen a drop in the number of fatalities on our roads—69 fewer than last year—we cannot stop at that. That is why we are rolling out this program across the state on those intersections and on other sections of road that you have talked about where we have identified a big accident history.

One of the projects—and I talked about it earlier—where we have a very dangerous intersection is the intersection of Horse and Jockey Road and the Peak Downs Highway near the racecourse mill at Mackay. That is a very dangerous intersection and one which requires us to look at the work we are doing there.

In your electorate—and some of these may not necessarily be Safer Roads Sooner funding, but I know we are doing a lot of work in your electorate on safety—one of the things which I know you will appreciate is the safety of primary school students and the mums and dads who drop off those students. A total of \$70,000 has been allocated for a passenger set-down facility at the Tamborine Mountain State School. We work closely with local governments to provide many of those facilities, and that will be really welcomed by those particular residents. Tamborine Mountain State High School does not miss out, with \$125,000 towards passenger set-down facilities as well.

Going back to your Beaudesert bypass question, we have \$500,000 for concept planning for the Beaudesert bypass. I think that is a great win for your community and one that you can report back about. The total cost is \$1.2 million for that project. So we are certainly pulling our weight in your electorate, member for Beaudesert. Thank you so much for that question on Safer Roads Sooner. We have a technical committee which is made up of my department's engineers and safety experts as well as an advisory committee which helps us assess candidates for Safer Roads Sooner projects across the state.

We have 97 new projects that will be delivered over the next three years. There are 74 new projects totalling \$54 million to target known sites where crashes have resulted in deaths and serious injuries across Queensland, and 23 new proactive projects totalling \$15.8 million to improve intersections and roadsides. They will provide signage and traffic signals and seal lengths of unsealed rural roads to provide safer overtaking opportunities.

Mr McLINDON: Minister, has your department carried out investigations in conjunction with the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and his department to calculate the projected and estimated total costs of police resources in this budget needed during Main Roads' projects in 2010-11?

Mr WALLACE: My regional officers as they roll out road construction programs work very closely with local police forces to keep the roadside safe. We talked earlier about the tragic accident that took the life of Murray Goodrich on the north coast. It was a terrible accident. That is why on some road projects we need police, and I make no apology for that. Having police there to look after these roadworks is so important.

At other roadworks we have licensed traffic controllers to help us undertake those works. We build those needs for police into our budgets for roadworks. One of the works which I want to mention, and there will be a complete closure coming up, is the Burdekin Bridge on the Bruce Highway between Ayr and Home Hill. That bridge will need to close completely. Off the top of my head I think that closure is coming up in a couple of weekends time. We may well require the use of the Police Service to do that, but unless we had that, unless that occurred, we would be unable to carry out that maintenance work on the Burdekin Bridge which is much needed.

In reply to your question, member for Beaudesert, we work closely with the police. Our policies are clear when it comes to road closures and traffic management. Associate Director-General Tesch, did you want to add something about the safety aspects that we undertake when we do those road closures and road maintenance?

Mr Tesch: Mr McLindon, for all of our projects we ensure that safety of our roadworkers is of the highest priority. All projects are progressively assessed through their early stages, through their actual delivery to determine what is the most appropriate means of ensuring the safety of all of our roadworkers. In response to an earlier question today, the minister outlined the steps that our RoadTek employees go to to ensure the safety of all of their employees. We ensure through the contracts that we let with all of the providers of services to the department that safety is of the utmost priority. There are terms in all of our contracts that require either registered traffic controllers or police where it is required to provide appropriate safety levels and standards. That can at times include closure of the road.

Mr McLINDON: Minister, I refer to page 118 of the Capital Statement document, which states—
The Queensland government is committed to delivering a roads program that ... will help sustain jobs throughout the state ...
What guarantee can you give to the job security of the employees of Queensland Motorways Ltd in relation to the proposed asset sales?

Mr WALLACE: We work very closely with the unions and the employees of Queensland Motorways as we prepare to sell the tolling rights to toll the Gateway and Logan motorways. Indeed, the Queensland government has been explicit about its intentions to protect workers transitioning to the privately owned Queensland Motorways Ltd.

In 2010 a working group was established. It comprised representatives from Queensland Motorways, Queensland Treasury, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, and relevant unions. The working group has commenced development of a workforce transition framework for the transition of QML employees to the new employer. The framework will ensure that employees' current employment conditions and entitlements are protected for the next three years. It is proposed that the framework will include specific details of employment conditions protected by the government's commitment to guarantee employment security for the three years beyond the date of the sale.

Importantly, furthermore, employees transferring to the new business will not experience any interruption to their continuity of service or accrued entitlements including access to existing superannuation entitlements. In order to ensure that QML employees' current employment conditions and entitlements are further protected, a new enterprise bargaining agreement will also be negotiated. But why are we taking this action? Why are we selling the rights to toll the Gateway and Logan motorways? It means that we will be able to free up funds quicker and sooner so that we can continue our record \$18 billion roads program in Queensland—a roads program that is employing about 30,000 Queenslanders.

As we have seen already this morning, right across the state communities are relying on that for their employment—communities out west in Charleville, communities in Emerald, communities in Townsville and communities in the Beaudesert area. Indeed, in the Beaudesert area we will sustain around 248 jobs with our roads-building program. This program funds those important set-downs that I have already mentioned; \$3 million for the construction of a bridge and approaches over the Albert River on the Waterford-Tamborine Road at a total cost of \$20 million; \$500,000 for that bypass which we talked about; \$1.5 million for the construction of a sealed standard on the Lake Moogerah Road between Reynolds Creek and Mount Gravel at a total cost of \$2 million; \$6.4 million for the construction of a bridge on Boonah Fassifern Road over Reynolds Creek at a total cost of \$7.5 million. This is part of our Regional Bridge Renewal Program. Communities are benefiting from strengthened and new bridges because of the tough decisions we have had to make.

Mr McLINDON: Minister, given that the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement states 'neither party may adopt or maintain either on the basis of a regional subdivision or on the basis of its entire territory measures that (a) impose limitations on the total number of natural persons that may be employed in a particular service sector,' do you not agree, then, that the jobs of employees of Queensland Motorways Ltd potentially are not secure for the three years the government claims?

CHAIR: Minister, I will allow the question.

Mr WALLACE: No, I have to disagree. It is proposed that the framework will include specific details on employment conditions protected by the government's commitment to guarantee employment security for three years beyond the date of that sale. Mr Tesch, you sit on the committee. Would you like to talk about some of those conditions that we will guarantee with that particular sale?

Mr Tesch: Thank you, Minister. We will ensure that all employees are provided with continuity of employment including the same terms and conditions of the employment as they currently enjoy under the employment contracts that they have with Queensland Motorways under the same terms and conditions as they are employed with by Queensland Motorways.

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, Mr Tesch. As I said earlier, we made the tough decisions. It was not easy for the government to make these decisions to sell the rights to toll on Gateway and Logan motorways, but it ensures that we continue to roll out programs right across the state. These programs we are talking about today exist because we had a plan. We have stuck to that plan and we are able to roll out \$3.3 billion worth of road infrastructure this year. That has meant around 30,000 jobs due to our program. That has meant new infrastructure across the state, in a growing state and a growing community. We have made those tough decisions, but I for one stand by those tough decisions that have helped us roll out further road programs across the state including in the member for Beaudesert's electorate.

We will provide \$400,000 to remove roadside hazards, delineations and sealing shoulders on a section of the Beaudesert-Nerang Road at a total cost of \$500,000. That is one of those Safer Roads Sooner program budget items that we talked about earlier. We will provide \$350,000 for interchange improvements on the Mount Lindesay Highway at Tullamore Way intersection, Gleneagle, at a total cost of \$450,000; \$550,000 for the removal of trees, insulation of guardrails, signage and line marking on a section of the Tamborine Mountain Road between Eagle Heights Road and Beaudesert-Nerang Road at a total cost of \$750,000.

We are funding these programs, better roads and safer roads through some tough decisions. Can I say that those agreements will ensure that we are able to look after our good workers at Queensland Motorways. Can I add that we have seen massive numbers of people—over 280,000 people—travelling on the network on the Friday before the Queen's birthday long weekend. So we are responding. Our good men and women who run that system deserve a pat on the back for getting people to and from the destination quickly and safely.

Mr McLINDON: I am not overly happy with the answer in terms of the 500 people employed. Unless the government intends to run over the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement, then I would otherwise argue that their jobs are not secure. For my next question I refer to page 119 of the Capital Statement document, where it states—

- \$95.9 million to continue the construction of a roundabout on Airport Drive, as part of the Airport Link Project, at a total estimated cost of \$297.3 million.

Given this significant contribution of taxpayer dollars towards the Airport Link project, can you please outline the projected traffic volume needed to demonstrate the project's viability, and what traffic volumes does your department expect?

Mr WALLACE: The Airport Link is a \$4 billion plus project which my colleague the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning has carriage of, but I am happy to answer a few questions about it as well. Airport Link is a \$4 billion plus project, construction of which is overseen by City North Infrastructure, a Queensland government operation.

Airport Link will be the first major motorway linking Brisbane city to the northern suburbs, the domestic and international airports. It will be Australia's longest road tunnel, with a total of 12 kilometres of road and tunnel ramps. The Airport Link project will connect the Clem7 tunnel, the Inner City Bypass and the local road network at Bowen Hills to the northern arterials of Gympie Road and Stafford Road at Kedron. It also connects Sandgate Road and the East-West Arterial leading to the Brisbane Airport and precinct.

Airport Link, when opened to motorists, will be a free-flow toll road ensuring faster, safer and less congested journeys to and from the city and airport. As part of the Airport Link project, the Northern Busway is currently under construction. It will connect the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital to Kedron via the Lutwyche Road and Gympie Road corridor.

The Northern Busway will be a two-lane two-way road for buses. The busway will be underground for approximately 1.5 kilometres between Truro Street, Windsor and Sadler Street, Kedron, surfacing at two new busway stations at Lutwyche and Kedron. The new busway will enhance the accessibility to public transport for northside residents and is expected to halve the average travel time between the Royal Brisbane Hospital and Kedron.

In terms of the roundabout which the member for Beaudesert mentioned, \$327 million has been allocated for design and construction of the Airport Roundabout Upgrade as part of the Airport Link project. The Airport Roundabout Upgrade involves construction of a new four-lane flyover connecting the East-West Arterial. We think we will have 55,000 people per day using that very busy roundabout. The high-capacity fast diamond interchange replaces the existing big roundabout. There will be widening of the East-West Arterial from two to three lanes each way and surface road improvements to Airport Drive.

This project will deliver improved connections to the airport precinct and the Gateway Motorway, improve traffic flow and reduce delays to motorists travelling to and from the airport and the Australia TradeCoast. It separates city-airport traffic from the local road network, enhancing driver safety and travel times. It is a good project. It is one which is reducing congestion. I can see the member for Brisbane Central nodding. She is certainly aware of the benefits that that project will bring.

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

Mr RYAN: I note the government's support for heavy vehicle recovery units and the clear benefits for motorists in my area of the world. I note the reference to new heavy vehicle recovery units in the SDS at page 2-116. I ask the minister to inform the committee how these two new units have been of benefit to motorists in the South-East Queensland road network as a result of heavy vehicle incidents?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Morayfield for his question. We call them our cranes on wheels. There are not many of their kind in the world. They are ours and they have been out and about on our roads helping to cut congestion on South-East Queensland's busy road network.

Our heavy vehicle recovery units have helped out at 11 major incidents since their official handover late last year. Like most technology that is the first of its kind in the world, they have hit a few speed bumps along the way. They are brand-new. This is the first time they have been trialled. I have been assured that those issues have been ironed out and the custom-built machines are officially in business.

These heavy vehicle recovery units are capable of lifting 20 tonnes. They are ideal for one of the worst types of accidents that cause lots of congestion—truck rollovers. In three of the most recent truck rollovers the units took less than 20 minutes to right the trucks and clear them off the road, compared with an average response and clearance time of three hours using conventional equipment. When you take into account the 25 per cent of traffic congestion that is caused by the accidents, these new units are a welcome addition to our congestion-busting efforts.

The heavy vehicle recovery units can travel at speeds of up to 80 kilometres per hour. They are much quicker than a normal crane. They are more flexible than a crane and can operate in quite small spaces. They have been custom built with five hydraulic winches and a hydraulic blade to clear debris and are equipped with cameras.

The Bligh government has been working with one of the industry's leading tow and crane suppliers to create a prototype capable of efficiently moving rolled or damaged heavy vehicles and their loads from the road. Issues uncovered during the training period have also been remedied by the supplier at no cost to the department. The units have attended incidents in the greater Brisbane area, including the Gatton-Esk Road, Enoggera Creek Bridge and Gateway Motorway. The heavy vehicle recovery units are called out to truck rollovers on state roads within an 80-kilometre radius of Brisbane city. It is all about tackling congestion and keeping traffic moving. That has to be good for the motorists.

Mr WELLS: This is about the Bruce Highway upgrade, which is at page 2-116 of the SDS. I ask about the development of the Sunshine Coast given the population growth there. What we are going to need between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast is a fast rail, road and bus connection service. I wonder whether the minister could advise whether he has any plans and how we would go with something like that.

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Murrumba. You certainly understand the fast growth that is occurring in that north coast area having represented it quite ably for a number of years. All going well with the environmental approval processes, the planned link will be built along the original route for the corridor across the Mooloolah River. We listened to the community and took their concerns on board, and the route we have chosen is one that will have the least impact on the local community.

The original transport corridor was set aside many years ago for this very purpose, and that is the route we have decided to take. It was a complex process to get to where we are, and we have come up with a solution that we believe will be in everyone's best interests. We conducted several rounds of

community consultation, undertook extensive investigations into an alternative route and commissioned studies by an environmental expert. We went back to the drawing board so that the final decision would be the right decision. A number of people had concerns about the 1.8-kilometre section of the transport corridor going through private land at Hideaway Waters. Hopefully their concerns have been allayed.

Let us talk about our future plans there. This high-speed, state-of-the-art rail, road and bus link from Brisbane all the way to the Sunshine Coast will change the face of the transport network in the south-east. It is all about planning and managing growth. With 2,000 people heading to Queensland each week, it is more important than ever before to plan for our future growth. That is why this rail, road and bus project is so important.

When the project is completed, subject to federal approval processes and funding, it will go a long way towards easing congestion along the Nicklin Way. It will slash travel times between Caloundra, Mooloolaba and Maroochydore and offer better transport options to get around this very fast growing region.

Ms MALE: I refer to SDS page 2-114 and the need to plan for and manage growth. I ask the minister to advise the committee of steps the Bligh government is taking to tackle congestion on the state's busy motorways.

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for her question. She drives in regularly to this place and would know that we have to do everything in our power to tackle congestion. We are tackling congestion with sensible, workable solutions. We have just doubled the number of roadside traffic cameras in the south-east. It is a win for motorists, with more than 50 new webcams being rolled out across the state. The cameras stream live vision to the traffic management website, alerting motorists to potential hazards, traffic snarls and delays. Our new webcams will save time for people who lead busy lives. They will be able to click on the website, work out where the trouble spots are and plan their journey before they leave home. We are installing new cameras in more than 50 busy roadside locations on the Sunshine Coast, in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast. These sites have been carefully chosen. They are places prone to congestion and traffic build-up. We will have 100 webcams up and running.

Make no mistake, we are serious about tackling congestion and making life better for motorists. We have made the tough choices, and the government sticks by them because they are the right choices. We are able to deliver a first-class road network for Queenslanders—like the \$315 million Ted Smout bridge, which will go a long way to slashing travel times on both sides of that bridge.

The new Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge, part of the \$2.5 billion Gateway corridor upgrade, means that motorists will have six lanes all the way from Nudgee to Nerang, six months ahead of schedule. The \$1.95 billion Ipswich Motorway upgrade from Dinmore to Goodna sees six lanes, with room to expand to eight in the future. That is what I call planning for the growth.

There is almost \$1 billion to upgrade the Pacific Motorway between the Gateway and Tugun to give a smoother, swifter and more seamless ride. We are slashing travel times. We are building bigger and better roads right across the state. Importantly, we have free-flow tolling on the Gateway and Logan motorways to deliver travel time savings to busy motorists. No longer do motorists have to stop or slow down to pay their tolls. I am talking about time savings of around 10 minutes across the network. That is a big saving for motorists who lead busy lives.

CHAIR: I know that we have spoken about the Safer Roads Sooner program as per SDS page 2-116 and the \$66 million set aside for this. I am really interested in this so I am going to explore it a bit further. I ask the minister to please advise the committee what other initiatives are in place or planned to make our road network safer for motorists and other road users. Can you explore that a bit further?

Mr WALLACE: Thank you for your question. You are absolutely right. There is \$66 million—clickety-click—for safer roads. We are into it. There are 97 important projects.

One of the projects I am really keen to look at and one of the ones that I have championed across the state is what we call visibeads. These are very small glass beads that we are now putting on sections of our road network—especially the Bruce Highway. They were pioneered in North Queensland. We are now laying them as we do line marking on our roads. What that means in times of wet weather—we get a bit of that in North Queensland—fog or at dusk or night time is that when you drive along with your headlights on you can see the line markings much more clearly. The demonstration might not work too well with the lights on in here, but say Dave is in his car driving along in rainy weather; he can see those visibeads much more clearly. It shows him the delineation of the road and where the line markings are. It helps keep him safer on the roads. This is a real win for motorists. It is a practical win for motorists across the state. I have allocated \$6 million to roll out this program across the state. As I said, the trial we held in the North Queensland area was very successful.

There is another thing that the visibeads have aided with. We have put them in the line markings on the roundabouts on the Captain Cook Highway north of Cairns. Motorcyclists or bicycle riders found the traditional line markings quite slippery, especially in wet weather. These visibeads have much more grip and keep motorcyclists and bike riders safe in wet weather. They last a lot longer than the traditional line markings so it is a saving. They are manufactured here in Australia. I reckon that is good news. It shows the smart way we think about these particular things.

We have brighter and wider line markings on major arterial roads. We will roll them out on the Bruce, New England and Cunningham highways. They are 50 per cent wider than normal line markings. So people will see these line markings at night-time, see them when it rains, see them when it is foggy. It is a smart move and Queensland is leading the way.

Ms MALE: In response to my second question about infrastructure spending in regional Queensland the minister touched on heavy vehicle rest stops. I am wondering whether the minister could provide some further information on this important safety initiative, particularly in relation to roads out west where drivers are quite literally in for the long haul.

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for the question. It is another very good question. We are getting a lot more heavy vehicles on our roads. People need a break and to stop. One of the best things we can do at a Main Roads level is give people a safe and comfortable place to stop.

I was out on the Gregory Developmental Road last week, as I said. We are going to spend \$700,000 building a new rest stop there. It is a busy road. We will build it near the intersection—the member for Hinchinbrook may be aware of the intersection—of the Gregory Developmental Road and Hervey Range Road. A lot of heavy vehicles use that neck of the woods. That is important for all road users but particularly drivers of heavy vehicles. It is about roads being safer. There are few things that are more important than that.

We will work closely with industry to ensure our heavy vehicle rest areas are in the right place on the network. We want to make sure we get them in the right spots. We are rolling them out on major highways in regional Queensland over the months ahead. It is a \$56 million safety initiative that will deliver 58 new and upgraded heavy vehicle rest areas and 24 stopping places. We already have six sites completed and, depending on the weather, will aim to deliver a total of 14 new sites by the end of the year. We are drawing on the federal and state funding to deliver more rest areas, with almost \$35 million provided under the Nation Building Program and round 1 of the heavy vehicle safety and productivity package. There is \$22 million for our state programs. Time for another road trip, Madam Chair, if that is all right.

CHAIR: That is fine.

Mr WALLACE: Where are they? There are 12 on the Bruce Highway; six on the Warrego Highway; five each on the Gregory and Gulf developmental roads; four on the Burnett Highway; three on the Landsborough Highway; two each on the Castlereagh, Cunningham, Dawson, Flinders, Leichhardt and Moonie highways and the Kennedy Development Road; and a further rest area for each of the Capricorn, D'Aguilar, Gore, Mitchell, New England and Peak Downs highways as well as the Burke and Diamantina development roads and the Mundubbera to Durong road. We will be upgrading our existing heavy vehicle rest stop areas across the regions when and where they are needed. But it is not only heavy vehicles that I know will stop there. Mums, dads and kids might need to go to the loo or just have a break and also the grey nomads—which I know the member for Murrumba will not be joining—will find useful benefits at our rest stops across the state.

CHAIR: Minister, I again refer to the SDS at page 2-116 to explore further a number of new bridges and upgrades to bridges in the state's road network. Can I ask the minister to provide a progress report to the committee on the work being carried out across regional Queensland to make our bridges once again safer and more secure for motorists?

Mr WALLACE: Good question, member for Brisbane Central. We have seen bridges galore today—Ted Smout, the Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge, Forgan Bridge, Endeavour Bridge, Hospital Bridge in Mackay, lots of bridges. There are bridges everywhere. It is a big job, so let me put it in perspective. We manage about 2,899 bridges, including 348 timber bridges and 4,064 major culverts. These bridges connect communities. That is why it is important to maintain them. Engineers routinely carry out inspections to make sure they are safe for motorists. Around \$558 million will be spent on our bridge network over the next four years. That is about \$140 million a year.

Major projects underway and planned include \$30 million for the Riverside Expressway, and people in this neck of the woods would know that at night-time it is very busy there because we are lifting a lot of those structures up to replace the bearings—a big program; \$8 million for the Burnett River Bridge at Bundaberg; \$65 million for the Don River bridges on the Leichhardt Highway near Wowan; \$148 million for the Forgan Bridge over the mighty Pioneer River; and \$315 million for the brand-new Ted Smout Bridge, and I will talk about it again because I love talking about that bridge, as I am sure the member for Murrumba does as well.

There is also our Regional Bridge Renewal Program—\$350 million to fast-track the replacement of timber bridges. We have identified 104 bridges to be replaced and five bridges will be upgraded and rehabilitated. In that program so far, 82 bridges have been replaced including the very well named Wallace Creek Bridge on the Boonah-Rathdowney road in the south coast region, and I note the member for Beaudesert's smile. It is not named after me, member for Beaudesert; I can assure you of you that. There is also Caboolture Creek on the Yandina-Bli Bli road in the north coast region and the Endeavour River Bridge on the Endeavour Valley Road in the far-north region, a \$12.5 million project.

Indeed, that bridge is quite interesting because we had to contend with a number of hungry crocodiles near the bridge construction site, so we have to be very careful. Of the 27 bridges yet to be completed, 13 are expected to be finished this financial year, six the following year and two the year after that.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr RYAN: Minister, I know you are passionate about cleaner motorways, and I think you have got form for being on the side of a road picking up some rubbish at times. I refer you to the SDS at page 2-115 and the need to protect and maintain our roads assets now and for future generations, and I ask: with millions of motorists driving on South-East Queensland motorways every day, could the minister please advise the committee what steps are being taken to help keep our state-of-the-art motorways clean and tidy?

Mr WALLACE: It is something we wish we did not have to do. In fact, I have picked up a bit of litter on the side of our motorways. I wish people would keep it in the car and dispose of it in a sensible manner, but that does not happen. Main Roads has embarked on a major clean-up campaign across our motorways in SEQ this year. We have put on extra crews who have picked up everything from fast-food wrappers, glass, plastic bottles, car parts and even old furniture and fridges. We had a number of work crews made up of people doing community services to pay off their fines also out there cleaning up debris and removing rubbish. It costs us about \$1 million a year to keep them in tiptop shape.

Unfortunately, every dollar spent on removing rubbish from our motorways is a dollar that is not being spent on roads and road safety. Motorists in Brisbane threw out more than 2,000 cubic metres of garbage onto our motorways last year. That is almost enough to fill an Olympic sized swimming pool. It is not good enough, and I am sure everyone here agrees. Around 1,500 cubic metres of mess was removed from the M1 last year. More than \$1.6 million was spent on rubbish removal in the Main Roads north coast region last financial year. Of that, \$600,000 was spent cleaning up the National Highway and more than \$1 million on state controlled roads in the region.

More than \$820,000 was spent removing rubbish and debris on the M1 between Springwood and Tugun. I urge motorists to think twice before littering our motorways. It is an offence by law and it is an offence to the majority of responsible road users who also travel on the state road network. Apart from that, the clean-up costs money—money that I would rather spend upgrading our existing road network and improving safety for all motorists.

Mr WELLS: The SDS at page 2-114 refers to the widening of the Pacific Motorway between Nerang and Worongary. How far have you got with that project so far? What are you planning to do in the future with it?

CHAIR: Minister, there is probably less than two minutes on the clock.

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is another good project, member for Murrumba. Like your area of the woods, there are big changes on the Gold Coast, and we are responding to those changes. It is a win for workers and a win for motorists. We have got almost \$1 billion in state and federal funding to upgrade the Pacific Motorway between the Gateway Motorway and Tugun. It is about tackling congestion on one of our state's busiest motorways. Some \$420 million has been set aside for the M1 upgrade between Nerang and Tugun. Funding has been directed to areas of the greatest need. We want to get traffic flowing faster and we want to meet the safety needs of motorists.

Let us take a look at the Pacific Motorway. The Nerang South interchange was completed in August last year, the first of the M1 upgrades. The Mudgeeraba interchange upgrade is expected to be completed in early August. The Varsity Lakes interchange upgrade is expected to be finished later this year. Part of this work includes connections to the new Varsity Lakes rail station, which opened in December last year. Work on the \$158 million upgrade to widen the motorway from four to six lanes between Nerang South and Worongary is expected to be completed late next year. This is one of the busiest sections of the motorway, carrying around 100,000 vehicles a day.

Improvements near the Coomera interchange are scheduled for completion in late August. Early works will start later this year on the Robina interchange. The main upgrade work is scheduled to start early next year following the completion of the Mudgeeraba and Varsity Lakes interchange upgrades. These progressive upgrades will provide a huge job boost for the region. We are talking 1,700 jobs. That is jobs for local workers on the Gold Coast. It is a very busy section of road, one—

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. That concludes the time for government members' questions. I call the member for Maroochydore.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, while your government has delayed the opening of the Sunshine Coast University Hospital, it is due to open in 2016, and I ask: will you advise what roads will be provided to the south as well as to the north to service this hospital? When will this infrastructure be delivered?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Maroochydore for her question. It is a very fast growing neck of the woods. We are working very closely with the department of health on the Sunshine Coast hospital project to ensure that we have the infrastructure in place for that neck of the woods. So what are we doing in the Sunshine Coast hospital area? We are upgrading the pavement of the southbound

lane of the Bruce Highway, and the Nambour bypass is an important project there. But on the Sunshine Coast around the hospital site there is a lot of work that we are planning to do with the department of health. The Sunshine Coast, as we know, is one of the fastest growing urban areas of Australia, predicting a 75 per cent population growth over the next 20 years. A multimodal corridor is what we are planning there, and we talked about that earlier with the member for Murrumba. It will help meet the demands of growth not only for that hospital site but right across the coast. It will reduce traffic congestion, particularly along the Nicklin Way, which, on current projections, is expected to carry 90,000 vehicles per day by 2026.

The government has made commitments to improve health service delivery right across the state, and the Sunshine Coast hospital is important in that regard. My department meets with Queensland Health, which is leading the process, the Sunshine Coast Regional Council and Stockland through the Sunshine Coast University Hospital stakeholder coordination group meetings planning how we get services to that very busy hospital site, which is a 20-hectare site immediately south of the Kawana town centre. Queensland Health has progressed its master plan and received in-principle support and comments from my department. That was received on 18 February this year. On 11 June 2010 my department gave Queensland Health approval for two accesses onto Kawana Way. Significant road upgrades will be required for the hospital. Details are currently being negotiated with Queensland Health. We do that right across the state. We are doing it on the Gold Coast with the rapid rail and also the road interconnections. Indeed, I was looking at some of those road connections the other week on the Gold Coast into its new hospital.

My department has been and will continue to work directly with Queensland Health, TransLink, the Department of Infrastructure and Planning and other key stakeholders to establish requirements for the Sunshine Coast hospital. All in all, we are working very busily on the Sunshine Coast. Another major planning exercise is underway there on the Sunshine Coast looking at that hospital site and ensuring that we can really—

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, further to that, you mentioned the MMTTC as part of the access to the hospital. When will that be completed given that the hospital is due by 2016? Also, you mentioned that access has been negotiated onto Kawana Way. This is not a major arterial road for carrying traffic from Noosa through to Kawana. It is a local road. What works are you proposing to have in place?

CHAIR: Minister, you have probably got just over a minute.

Mr WALLACE: It is a pity. I will be quick then, Madam Chair. The Sunshine Coast multimodal transport corridor is a future transport corridor planned from Caloundra Road to the Sunshine Motorway. We will work with the local community, with the council and with Queensland Health, as I mentioned before, to ensure we deliver for that fast growing community. The multimodal corridor will provide commuters with an integrated transport solution through new road and public transport links between Caloundra, Moolooaba, Maroochydore and Noosa. Indeed, one of my first jobs as main roads minister was to open some new roads on the Sunshine Coast, and it was a pleasure to do that. We have made big investments on the Sunshine Coast.

The multimodal corridor is needed to meet the demands of growth in that community. As I said earlier, it will reduce traffic congestion, particularly on the Nicklin Way, which, on current projections, is expected to carry 90,000 vehicles by 2026. It will provide capacity for the development of public transport initiatives and CoastConnect and develop a new rail link between Caloundra and Maroochydore. What we are doing not only here but importantly in Cairns as well with our multimodal corridor—

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Minister, the time for non-government questions has expired. I want to ask a question referring to the SDS at page 2-116 relating to regional roadworks. I ask the minister to inform the committee of works currently underway or planned for that vital tourist link, the Cook Highway, leading to Cairns's popular beaches. It is very nice. I have been there recently. Can you inform us about that?

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, it is a very important road network north of Cairns—the Captain Cook Highway. I want to really congratulate the member for Barron River, Steve Wettenhall, who has been a campaigner for us to improve safety there, especially for cyclists. It is a very busy stretch of the road. Indeed, the Main Roads department in the area has worked with schools to form what they call a bike bus which allows kids to get to school safely in, if you like, a bus pattern led by a teacher. That is great news. In the last 12 months we have carried out around \$1.8 million on safety measures at nine roundabouts on the Captain Cook Highway. It is about safety for motorists and cyclists. During the Road Safety Summit, which the member for Barron River organised last year, my department was busy at work carrying out \$300,000 on safety improvements at the busy Trinity Beach roundabout.

We are doing that right across the state on regional roads, because we have good people working in Main Roads. I mentioned Bert van Krieken, who retired last week after 25 years with the department. I love talking to staff in regional Queensland and talking about their jobs. We welcomed new staff and

congratulated others in their achievements across the state. Anthony Molino, who has just finished the first semester of his engineering degree, has joined Main Roads. Amanda Hill in the Townsville office was congratulated on her appointment as a roadworks inspector at the end of her traineeship. Bronwen Evans, again in the Townsville office, won Trainee of the Year—good people working for us in Main Roads. Jacinta Warland has been welcomed on board as our new cultural heritage officer, making sure we look after our significant cultural artefacts across the state. There is great team spirit across the state that shows that we are getting out and really delivering for roads.

In Rocky, Bobby Jo—good on Bobby Jo—was excited about her move to HR. In Cairns you could feel the excitement among Main Roads staff awaiting the arrival of federal transport minister, Anthony Albanese. I joined him in releasing plans for the southern access corridor in Cairns. These are good people who go to work every day building better roads and safer roads for Queenslanders. Staff up there have been working hard on this important project. People like Barry Gyte and Graham Magarry put in a great effort. Indeed, I think our regional director up there was under a bit of stress because he had to go and get his ticker fixed up. But he is all right. Good on you, Ron Michel, for coming through.

It is the same story across the state—Mackay, Emerald, Gladstone and Charters Towers, where I enjoyed chatting to staff. It is a great job being main roads minister—a \$3.3 billion budget, a big network to look after, but we are getting on with the job.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. That concludes the examination of the estimates of the portfolio of the Minister for Main Roads. Thank you, Minister, and officers for your attendance. The transcript of this part of the hearing will be available on the Hansard page of the Queensland parliament website within approximately two hours. The committee will now adjourn for lunch and resume at 1.30. 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 say a few words.

Mr WALLACE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Before we close, can I thank you and members of the committee. I enjoyed the committee meeting here today. Thank you so much. It is a bit cold this morning, but I know Hansard will do a good job. I thank them for their hard work. Can I especially thank my director-general, Dave Stewart, associate director-general, Alan Tesch, their executive staff and staff right across Main Roads—around 10,000 people doing a bloody great job, excuse the French, across the state, preparing for estimates and rolling out better roads across the state.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The committee will now adjourn for lunch.

Proceedings suspended from 12.32 pm to 1.30 pm

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D—DISABILITY SERVICES AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

In Attendance

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

Ms B Smith, Principal Adviser

Department of Communities

Ms L Apelt, Director-General

Mr M Hogan, Deputy Director-General, Disability and Community Care Services and Multicultural Affairs Queensland

Mr J Marsh, Director, Financial Services

Multicultural Affairs Queensland

Mr G Page, Executive Director

CHAIR: Good afternoon. The hearings of Estimates Committee D are 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. For those who do not know, I am Grace Grace, the member for Brisbane Central and the chair of the committee. Ms Fiona Simpson, the member for Maroochydore, is the deputy chair and the other committee members are Mr Andrew Cripps, the member for Hinchinbrook; Ms Carolyn Male, the member for Pine Rivers; Mr Aidan McLindon, the member for Beaudesert; Mr Mark Ryan, the member for Morayfield; and the Hon. Dean Wells, the member for Murrumba.

The committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2010 for the areas set out in the order of appointment dated 20 May 2010. The next item for consideration is the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs beginning with Disability Services. This afternoon the committee will adjourn proceedings for afternoon tea from 3.30 pm to 4.00 pm and will resume with Multicultural Affairs. The committee's proceedings are lawful proceedings and 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 otherwise. At present, everyone is asked to please turn off mobile phones or put them on silent mode if you have not already done so.

In accordance with standing order 206, any person admitted to this hearing may be excluded at the discretion of the chair or by order of the committee. The committee has resolved that audio and video recordings of these proceedings by the Parliamentary Service cameras and microphones shall be broadcast via the Parliamentary Service website and to receivers throughout the parliamentary precinct. Television film coverage and photography will be allowed during the chair's opening statements and the introductory statement of each minister as well as for a short period during each changeover of ministerial advisers.

I 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. The standing orders require that at least half the time available for questions at today's hearing be allocated to non-government members and 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 of about 20 minutes, commencing with non-government members. The committee has resolved that other non-government members will be given leave to attend, but there are not any who will be attending 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 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 and I invite you to do so.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you. The Bligh government is investing more than ever in disability and community care services. Our 2010-11 state budget will deliver a record \$1.61 billion to improve and expand disability and community care services across Queensland. That is up 15.2 per cent on last year's \$1.4 billion budget. This record investment reflects our determination to support jobs and deliver even better services for Queenslanders. The budget includes \$1.045 billion for disability services, \$528.7 million for home and community care and \$28.6 million for community mental health services and \$72.5 million in funding over the next four years will support new initiatives.

The overwhelming majority of the Disability and Community Care budget is focused on service delivery. Improving services is our No. 1 priority. That is why 95 per cent of our \$1.61 billion budget is targeted at service delivery. We have a capital works program of \$39.9 million. Overall, capital works and capital grants make up around four per cent of the total budget and all capital works and all capital grants are fully committed and spent over the life of the program.

On 2 June, the Premier and I launched a new action plan for children with a disability. This action plan outlines the government's commitment to ensure that children with a disability aged zero to eight and their families are connected with the supports that they need. Early intervention is one of my key priorities and the government is more determined than ever to support children with a disability and their families. The first eight years is an important time for children with a disability and families need access to appropriate supports and services during these years to ensure that their children get the very best start in life. That is why we are investing \$3 million over three years to create new autism early intervention centres in both Bundaberg and Mackay. We are delivering to these communities and we want to ensure that autism early intervention services are available right across the state.

Another of my key priorities is moving and diverting younger people with a disability from aged-care facilities. Queensland is also leading the way on this front. Across the state we have moved or diverted 100 young people from entering aged-care facilities. We are getting them into the supported accommodation that they need to live independently in the community. Just last month I visited a house in Mossman which is being adapted for three people with a disability who will be diverted from aged-care facilities and this is something that is being repeated in places right across Queensland.

Supporting ageing parent carers is the third of my key priorities and that is another field in which Queensland is once again leading the way. Under the disability assistance package, \$18.3 million in capital over three years is being provided to deliver more supported accommodation for people with a disability. We will deliver 126 extra places under this initiative and at least half of these will be for people with a disability who have ageing parent carers.

Our commitment to create stronger disability services includes social housing. We are delivering fully adaptable social housing units for people with a disability right across the state. Forty-three per cent of the public social housing now being delivered in Queensland is specially adapted for people with a disability.

The Bligh government is committed to supporting school leavers with a disability. Young people are our future and we need to support and nurture them. We are investing a total of \$64.6 million in 2010-11 to help people in care leaving school to find jobs, access further education, provide them with training and ensure that they can enjoy more social opportunities. We are also providing \$40 million in 2010-11 to fund more respite service across Queensland.

The Bligh government is developing a 10-year plan for disability services. In the coming months we will be asking Queenslanders to have their say at 20 public forums right across the state. The public consultation process is a call to action. It is about ensuring people with a disability are valued in the community and are able to participate and contribute to society. I look forward to hearing Queensland families share their ideas with us in the coming months.

The government is also developing a new multicultural policy for Queensland. That is why we have held 31 public forums across the state to hear Queenslanders' views about multiculturalism. So far we have received over 230 submissions to our discussion paper, *A multicultural future...for all of us* and will use these ideas to develop a new multicultural policy for Queensland. We will continue to support multicultural festivals, events and organisations via the Multicultural Assistance Program.

In conclusion, the Bligh government is committed to a fair and inclusive Queensland. We are investing in better services for Queenslanders with a disability and we are developing a new multicultural policy. Our policies are about providing people with choice and independence and, most importantly and fundamentally, we are about improving people's quality of life.

CHAIR: Thank you, minister. The first period of questioning is allocated to non-government members and I call the member for Hinchinbrook.

Mr CRIPPS: Thank you. In November 2009 the minister made a statement in the House in respect of the government's development of a 10-year disability services plan and the Productivity Commission investigation into the feasibility of an NDIS. While I acknowledge that the minister has made no formal commitment to the implementation of an NDIS, the national discussion about this proposal is one that we are all watching with considerable interest. In many ways, there is potential for

the establishment of an NDIS to supersede a state based 10-year disability plan. In terms of the cost to the budget of developing a 10-year plan, referred to on page 3-5 of the SDS, what is that cost and can the minister justify the expenditure in view of the prospect of an NDIS?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much for the question. It is a very good question and I will address it in two parts. The first question you raise is in relation to the 10-year plan. We have a discussion paper out there now right across Queensland and we will be having forums right across the state over the coming months. It is a call to action and it is based fundamentally on improving people's lives. Valmae from National Disability Services and her group developed what was called Blue Skies, and I know that you are familiar with that document. What we are saying is that we want to ensure that people have greater access to services, that they are fully included in our community and that we are providing the right supports for them.

Your second question in relation to the national disability insurance scheme is a very important one and it does need a little bit of caution. The federal government has asked the Productivity Commission to investigate the feasibility of a national disability insurance scheme. I have had many discussions with my federal counterpart, Bill Shorten, about this. In fact, it is raised at our discussions at a federal level. It is a very, very important new initiative and it is one that the Queensland government is going to give a lot of consideration to once that Productivity Commission report is finalised. But I do say that we have to be cautious. Why do I say that? Because there are a lot of people out there who are getting their hopes raised about this and we cannot raise people's hopes and dreams at this early stage. We need to see some more concrete evidence about what the national disability insurance scheme will deliver. But the early stages are very encouraging and I do wholeheartedly support the fact that the federal government is moving in this direction and that they have commissioned this very, very important work.

In relation to your question about the 10-year plan, we will be addressing 10 issues as part of this plan. There is a discussion paper and the forums are already underway. I attended the first forum just recently up at Marcoola and it was great to see over 90 people attending that forum. They were sharing with us their ideas and aspirations about how we can improve their quality of life.

The consultation plan is being met within our existing departmental resources. Once again, I welcome the federal government's views in relation to pursuing the national disability insurance, which is very important not just at a federal level but it will have an impact for Queensland families.

Mr CRIPPS: I refer to page 3-15 of the SDS and the allocated budget of \$1.6 billion for disability and community care services. The minister would be well aware of the Community Safeguards Coalition and its campaign against the forced co-tenancy of people with disabilities in disability support accommodation. Can the minister outline how the Disability and Community Care Services budget for 2010-11 seeks to reduce the instances of forced co-tenancy among people with disabilities in Queensland and any specific line items in the budget that achieve that aim?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you. Accommodation is very, very important for people with a disability and I know that you have come with me and visited some accommodation throughout the state. We have a very good capital program of building accommodation. In relation to your specific question about co-tenancy, there is no forced co-tenancy but I think everybody realises that we have to utilise our resources to the best of our capabilities and that does require that people do at times share houses—not in all instances but most of the time they will, in fact, share houses. That is because sometimes people will need more than one-on-one support. We have a lot of people in our community with complex disability needs. I have met these people and I have met these families.

What is also very important is that out in the regions I know that our officers work very, very closely with families to see how we can partner people so that they do actually share a common understanding, because you do not want a situation like the one I came across at one stage when I was up in Hervey Bay where there was a young person with a disability who was working who was living in a house with two people who had complex support needs. The family raised this issue with me and said, 'Look, even though it is a nice brand-new house, we do not think the mix is right.' So we spoke with that family. We are talking with the region. As other accommodation comes on board she will be moved to better suited accommodation for her specific needs.

We are very, very conscious of trying to make that match. But in all cases that does not happen straight upfront. As you can appreciate, there are a lot of people out there who need housing and we are doing our best to accommodate them as best we can. We are also adding 230 places for people over the 2010-11 budget. Once again, as I said in my opening statement, it is about choice and improving people's quality of life and that is what we are trying to do.

Mr CRIPPS: Following on from my previous question, the minister would also be aware that the Community Safeguards Coalition has issued a position statement on forced co-tenancy. I table the position statement for the advice of the committee. The position statement includes a definition of forced co-tenancy and asserts co-tenancy in these circumstances constitutes a contravention of article 19a of the United Nations Convention on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities which has been ratified by both the Commonwealth and the Queensland governments. Does the minister agree with the

definition of forced co-tenancy in the CSC's position statement and, if so, are there any allocations in this budget that are sufficient to ensure that no clients of DSQ are accommodated in circumstances that contravene article 19a to which the Queensland government is a signatory?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Even though the member did not refer specifically to the SDS in that question I am still happy to answer it. As the member was aware, I actually went through in quite some detail our policy about trying to find the right mix of people. The Queensland government is continuing to consult closely with key stakeholders. I have actually met with some of the advocacy groups about this very issue. We understand it is a complex issue. We are giving it priority and I am sitting down with people to ensure that we do get the best matches. But really it is going to be happening on the ground. It is really up to our staff to work closely with the families and to work closely with the person with a disability to find the right match. Sometimes if a match cannot be found then we will try to do the best that we can within our available resources. Sometimes that does mean that the person will have to stay with their family a little bit longer before we can find the right accommodation mix for them.

There are many dedicated staff out in the regions working with families. Sometimes these are very challenging times. As I have said to you previously, sometimes a place is found quite easily quite readily where you have a great mix of people who can get on, but once again sometimes there may be a person who has challenging behaviour and that mix is not right with having a shared arrangement with someone else.

I take on board the significant issue that you have raised. We are addressing it through our policy. I am addressing it through meeting with stakeholders and it is something that we do give a priority to within the department and I will continue those discussions.

Mr CRIPPS: I refer to page 3-5 of the SDS and funding for early intervention services to support children with autism spectrum disorder, the welcome investment in the regional cities of Bundaberg and Mackay and the valuable work of Autism Queensland and the AEIOU Foundation as the preferred NGO partners of Disability Services Queensland.

Can the minister please advise how many regional centres are not currently home to local Autism Queensland and AEIOU Foundation services and why during her ASD listening tour did the minister fail to visit communities such as Dalby and support local disability service providers such as Waminda Services Ltd where the feedback may not be so positive?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Autism is a very, very important issue. The member has heard me speak about this repeatedly in the House. Up to 350 children are diagnosed with autism each year. As you can see, we have actually produced the Action Plan for Children with a Disability and one of the key priorities there is in relation to delivering autism services.

I have travelled extensively across the state and I have met with Autism Queensland and I have met with AEIOU. What we are trying to do is deliver more autism services right across the state. When I went to Bundaberg and Mackay it was clearly evident to me that there was a real need for autism services there. They are major regional centres and they definitely need to have a service. In Bundaberg, I met with the Bundaberg support group with Jack Dempsey, your colleague, who also raised the issue with me. In Mackay, I met with the Mackay Autism Support Group with the local member there, Tim Mulherin. I know that Jan Jarratt, the neighbouring member, is also very supportive. I am very pleased that in this year's budget we can provide funding for the start of those services over the next financial year and I am also pleased to advise the committee that there is also some funding available in our capital grants program as well to purchase some properties for those services.

In relation to the issue that you have raised in the regional areas, I am very conscious that we need to deliver autism services out in the regions as well. When I was in Longreach for a community cabinet I met with some families there who were talking about their needs, where they have to travel long distances to get the services or Autism Queensland may only come in there once every few months and it was not really meeting their needs.

In my discussions with AEIOU they are looking at doing some broadcasting where the therapy services are actually broadcasted through the internet into people's homes which I think down the track will be also very beneficial to people. What I wanted to let the member know is that, having met with some people in the south-west region and in particular Stephen Hicks, the CEO from Waminda—he does wonderful work out there, especially in relation to respite—I have announced this week a \$1 million funding round which is now available in the south-west region. That is mainly for capital, but it is also for autism services as well. People can actually apply for this funding and it will be assessed.

I think as we travel around the state and we are looking at where there are centres and where they can provide outreach, it is very positive. I know that AEIOU is looking at expanding from the Sunshine Coast into other regions, other centres.

Mr McLINDON: In reference to page 16 in the Budget Measures documents, in relation to the \$21.5 million over four years to support young people with a disability leaving school or the child protection system to provide them with the skills and support to live as independently as possible in the community—and I commend you on this initiative—what percentage of people requiring such services does this \$21.5 million over the four years equate to?

Ms PALASZCZUK: In relation to post-school services, I think you heard in my opening address that it is seen as a very key priority in this year's budget. In fact, post-school services is very important. I think what we will see with the 10-year plan is that we really need to modernise the way in which we deliver post-school services. This is another issue that I have raised at a federal level. I think long gone are the days where people go into day respite centres and that there is not enough activities to keep people stimulated. I think we need to be responsive, we need to have very clear opportunities for people when they leave school.

When I have gone around and visited the special schools, not only in my electorate but around the state, families are saying to me, 'We want more options for our young adult child', when they are leaving that high school environment to go into future development. Whether that is going into a day service, that is one path; whether that is going into employment, that is another path; or whether it is continuing education, we need to make sure that people have a choice. As I said in my opening statement, this is about providing people with a real opportunity and a real choice.

I think what you will see by this extra funding is that we want to deliver more services to more people. This will actually enable a lot more people to benefit. Under this program the new funds alone will assist an extra 145 young people leaving school, rising to 181 over the following year. In our budget for 2010-11 we have \$40 million allocated. That means that over 2,700 school leavers will benefit right across Queensland.

In relation to the second part of your question where you were mentioning young people exiting the care of the state, once again we need to make sure that they have real opportunities. Once again it depends on the level of the complexity of their disability. Some school leavers and some children exiting the state have very complex needs and they will need more supports and others with less complex needs will need less supports. In relation to the funds that are allocated, I can advise the committee that in 2010-11 there will be an allocation of \$24.874 million and that will help approximately an extra 57 people, taking the total helped across the state to 300 people.

Mr CRIPPS: The minister will recall during consideration of the 2009-10 budget my interest in the \$16 million redevelopment of specialised accommodation units at Wacol for adults exhibiting challenging behaviours. The minister in response was quite clear stating during debate on the report of Estimates Committee D—

I can assure the member that every dollar that is committed to this initiative will be spent on that site.

Page 27 of the Capital Statement shows the total cost for the redevelopment of this infrastructure at Wacol is now \$13.7 million, \$2.3 million less than the total cost of the Wacol infrastructure redevelopment in last year's Capital Statement. Will the minister please advise why the budgeted cost of this project has declined by 14 per cent?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I just clarify: are you talking about the Capital Statement No. 27, and are you talking in particular about the Positive Futures accommodation or the Wacol infrastructure?

Mr CRIPPS: The Wacol infrastructure redevelopment.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Wacol infrastructure redevelopment is actually about the master plan. So it is the master plan of the whole Wacol site.

Mr CRIPPS: That is right.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The total cost of that initiative is \$13.732 million.

Mr CRIPPS: Last year it was \$16 million.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, just listen. Essentially that is for the master plan of the area. That includes the sewerage works that need to happen, the roads and eventually the landscaping. So what has happened is a proportion of that money has already been spent on that master plan. The majority of the funds will be spent on completing that infrastructure on that master plan.

As I stated in my opening statement, all the funds committed to this project will be spent. The Wacol infrastructure redevelopment complements the Positive Futures capital works. I am more than happy to talk about that with you at a later stage because I know your interest in it. It is a rolling four-year initiative. So that means that the funds were committed to in 2008-09 and it is a rolling program. All the funds committed will be spent on this project. It provides, as I stated, upgrading infrastructure such as water, roads and landscaping, to support existing and new accommodation on a redeveloped Wacol site. I think I have answered that question.

Mr CRIPPS: Minister, you will recall last year we debated in the parliament the expenditure for that particular item and I was talking about my interest in the \$16 million for 16 beds at Wacol. For the same line item this year—

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, you have actually got your line items wrong. You are actually talking about the Positive Futures accommodation and I am happy to talk about that.

Mr CRIPPS: Minister, the Wacol infrastructure redevelopment is very clear in its line item status in both budgets—one of the few items in the budget that is clear between the two years. It was \$16 million last year and this year it is \$13.7 million: \$2.3 million less. I just want to know why it has declined when we debated at the estimates committee—

Ms PALASZCZUK: No. There is a very clear explanation. I am happy to talk about this.

CHAIR: Your time has expired. Minister, I will give you 30 seconds.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The total estimated cost of the Wacol infrastructure has decreased by \$2.3 million because this has been reallocated to the Positive Futures accommodation, which has subsequently increased. When we are talking about these two line items, we need to talk about them together: we need to talk about the Positive Futures accommodation with the Wacol infrastructure. The Wacol infrastructure is to do with the master plan and the development, and the Positive Futures is to do with the construction and the refurbishment and the delivering of the places in this accommodation.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for questions by non-government members has expired. Minister, pages 3 to 6 of the SDS referred to the Younger People in Residential Aged Care initiative. Will the minister provide an update on what achievements Queensland has made in this program?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you and I welcome the question. As I stated initially in my opening statement, this has been a huge success in transforming the lives of Queenslanders with a disability. Queensland is investing \$23.9 million in the YPRAC over five years and these funds are being matched by the Commonwealth. These funds are helping to deliver on one of my key priorities which is to move or divert young people with a disability from entering aged-care facilities. Queensland, as I stated, is leading the way. From Far North Queensland to the Gold Coast we are helping younger Queenslanders to live independently in their own communities among people of their own age group. It is simply unacceptable in this day and age for young people to live in aged-care facilities when they would be better off living in accommodation of their own choice.

Last month I visited a Mossman property which is being modified to provide a new home to three Queenslanders with a disability. The property overlooks a culturally significant site at Mount Demi, which is part of the Mossman Gorge, and it bears cultural importance to one of the new residents. Jeffery Finlay is one of the residents who will be moving into the residence when works are completed later this year. He will be returning home to Mossman 20 years after an accident which left him a quadriplegic. Jeffery has spent much of his adult life in the Princess Alexandra Hospital, a series of aged-care facilities and a specialist disability unit in Mackay. He is now living in Gordonvale, south of Cairns, but is looking forward to moving back to Mossman, where most of his family and friends live. Jeffery's story is a great example of how this initiative is transforming people's lives, and stories like this are being played out right across Queensland.

In May I officially opened Ellen Buckley Place, Inala. This is a new purpose design accommodation complex that is helping eight younger people to live independently. The units are located close to wheelchair accessible parkland, shops and community services. They are named after a local woman, Ellen Buckley, who passed away last year from Huntington's disease. Ellen Buckley was a strong advocate of independent living for people with a disability, and it is fitting that these units now bear her name.

Earlier this year I visited St John's Community Care in Gordonvale, which is now home to four younger people with a disability who have been diverted from the Cairns Base Hospital. These four people will get short to medium-term accommodation and support at St John's while long-term support options are put in place. Once again, this is another example of changing people's lives.

Through this YPRAC program we have also purchased properties in Townsville and Mooloolaba. These will be modified and adapted to provide more accommodation choices for younger Queenslanders with a disability. Last month the Premier turned the first sod on a new seven one-bedroom unit complex being built by Youngcare in Coomera. This is delivering on a \$3 million election commitment and it will help seven young people to live independent lives. Last month the federal parliamentary secretary for disability services and the federal government said that they would be considering extending the life of this program. It is such an important program and I think it needs to be continued.

Mr RYAN: Minister, pages 2-6 and 3-9 of the budget papers refer to the disability assistance package. What is the current status and estimated outcomes of this package for Queensland?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for his question and I know his interest in this area. Under the state-Commonwealth disability assistance package, Queensland is rolling out an \$18.3 million capital program to meet a very real accommodation need. Across the state we are working with non-government organisations to deliver sustainable housing arrangements for people with a disability, primarily to those who are ageing parent carers. The projects funded through DAP involve the renovation, purchase and construction of accommodation. To date, six dwellings have been built or

purchased, creating an additional 25 housing places for people with a disability. In July 2009 I had the pleasure of opening one of these houses in Toowoomba and meeting some of the people who are benefiting under this program.

In May I visited Emerald to turn the first sod on a new four one-bedroom unit complex being built under this initiative. The new units under construction are a win for the Emerald residents who have fought so hard to get more accommodation for people with a disability. Emerald's Friends of the Emerald Rural and Remote Communities took up the fight in 2007 to secure more funding for local disability housing. What is great about the block that they have purchased is that they mentioned to me that there is enough space at the back if they want to expand and build another one—even more housing available in Emerald.

This is a great initiative, too, because it is not just happening in south-east Queensland. This is housing that is being built right across Queensland. I often get out to the regions and I know that this initiative is ensuring that people get to live in their own communities. They get to remain local and to stay connected to their friends and family.

We are also transforming people's lives in places like Logan, Maryborough, Nanango, Cairns and Bundaberg. Under the capital funding memorandum of understanding agreed by the state and Commonwealth, Queensland is required to deliver 36 accommodation places. However, we are on track to deliver about 126. The committee may be interested to know that the reason Queensland is able to do this is that we have partnered with NGOs, and the NGOs are actually donating land that they own. So they are donating the land and we are building the infrastructure on top of that land. So that means we are building more accommodation and delivering more places. In fact, I think other states could look towards Queensland and learn a lot from what we are doing. By securing those partnerships, it would mean that more people will be catered for.

As you would realise, there are many people out there who are very worried about what is going to happen to their young son or daughter when they are no longer here. It is very confronting for them. They want to know that their child, their loved one, is going to be in secure accommodation when they are no longer here. That is why we need to keep delivering on this very, very important project.

Mr WELLS: I refer the minister to page 3-5 of the SDS and the action plan for children. I ask the honourable lady: what is the focus of the plan and what are the priorities?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for his question and also for his interest. I know he has taken a very keen interest in children with a disability over many years. I am very pleased that this action plan has been finalised and was officially launched by the Premier in June. The plan outlines our government's commitment to ensuring that children with a disability and their families are connected to the supports that they need. Building Bright Futures has an early intervention focus. We want to ensure that these children receive the very best support. It aims to deliver more responsive and better targeted government and non-government services to families with a child with a disability through five key priority areas. They are: information, early intervention services, services in rural and regional areas, a skilled and knowledgeable workforce and evidence based practice.

The action plan also outlines a range of new funding strategies. In total, the government has allocated an additional \$12.7 million over the next three years to provide specialist disability services to children with a disability. The funding includes \$1.3 million in 2010-11 to support approximately 108 additional children and families with respite services. This will increase to \$1.8 million from 2011-12, supporting an approximate 150 additional families with respite services. There is \$1.6 million from 2010-11 to provide family support to an additional 14 families caring for a child with high and complex support needs per year, and families will be able to access a range of flexible and responsive services strengthening their resilience and increasing their support networks. The funding includes \$1 million each year for four years for two new autism services, as I mentioned earlier, in Bundaberg and Mackay. This will be to provide services to approximately 60 children with autism.

Building Bright Futures also includes a range of initiatives aimed at improving access to information and early intervention services for children with a disability and their families. These include two new pilot initiatives—the Child Connect initiative and the Self-Directed Support initiative. I have already allocated \$245,000 in 2009-10 to establish and implement the Child Connect initiative. Currently being trialled in Ipswich and Townsville, the Child Connect initiative aims to support 80 children with a disability and their families each year. Child Connect officers will target hard to reach families caring for a child with a disability or developmental delay aged up to six years and link them to early intervention services and relevant community services such as parenting programs.

I have also allocated \$482,800 in 2010-11 to pilot the Self-Directed Support initiative for children with a disability aged birth to six years and their families on the Sunshine Coast. This initiative has been very well received. The pilot will support an additional 40 children and their families each year to identify the services and supports they need and provide them with the funding to organise these services.

Ms MALE: Minister, on page 3-5 of the SDS it refers to support to people with a disability. Can you advise the committee of any support from Disability Services that is available for people who need aids and equipment?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for her question. Funding of aids and equipment enables the purchase of items such as communication devices and mobility aids, which are essential to achieving independence and improving the quality of life for people with a disability. Aids and equipment also provide practical assistance to families, carers and service providers to strengthen their capacity to continue providing vital support and services.

Today I am pleased to announce a further \$1 million is available in 2010-11 to enable the purchase of aids and equipment to support children with a disability aged zero to 12 years. Funding will be brokered across the state through the existing 18 funded non-government service providers that are currently providing timely responses for people with disabilities and their families. This additional funding demonstrates our government's commitment to deliver on the children's action plan. It aims to connect families to supports and services that they need.

Disability Services will advertise the aids and equipment funding in tomorrow's *Courier-Mail*, outlining contact details for families wanting to discuss this funding. Families can apply for assistance through their local Disability Services regional centre or by telephoning Smart Service Queensland. This funding complements other existing initiatives that provide vital aids and equipment to Queenslanders with a disability.

One of the reasons that we have broadened it up to 12, more than just the zero to eight cohort, is that when children are leaving primary school and going into high school it is a time of growth and probably a time to get a new wheelchair or a new hoist at home. So it is very important that we capture the zero to 12 age group and that it is not narrowed. I know that members would be aware that often families come to you in times of need. A couple of weeks ago I met with a family and their son has cerebral palsy. She said to me, 'My whole life would be improved if I could just have a new wheelchair.' I think there is a great need out there. I would encourage families who are in need of these supports to contact us to be eligible for this funding round. It is very important. It is very needed. It is very necessary. It is something that we are delivering on.

CHAIR: Minister, I know that we have referred to autism services before. I want to explore further particularly those cited on pages 3 to 5 and 3-9 of the SDS. Can the minister tell the committee what the government strategy is to address the issue for families state-wide and what funding is available in this important area of autism?

Ms PALASZCZUK: As I mentioned earlier, autism is a complex, lifelong disability. People with autism have social and communication difficulties. What the studies have clearly showed is that early intervention works. If we can get in there early and get the supports needed, it will transform the lives of children with autism. When I was in Cairns I met with a young woman and her son. She said to me that a year before her son came to the centre run by Autism Queensland he was non-verbal—he could not speak. Now he is communicating. The local member, Curtis Pitt, and I had a full discussion with this young child. His life is completely transformed because he has the necessary supports and therapy that he needs.

This is happening right across Queensland. When I went to visit the autism service in Rockhampton the same thing was happening, and also out at Moorooka and the ones run by AEIOU. We are seeing a recognition right across Australia that we need to tackle autism. That is why it is so important that when I travel and hear people's stories and see where there are deficiencies in services we then make inroads and we deliver. As I said previously, it is also very important we make sure those rural and remote areas are getting the services.

As the committee can appreciate, we cannot deliver everything all at once. I have asked the department to do a needs based assessment of autism services right across the state. We need to make sure we get the balance right. We are delivering in the significant regional centres, but we need to ensure we are hitting the mark and delivering the services these children need. Michael Hogan might want to add to this because he has been familiar with the provision of this assessment we are doing across the state.

Mr Hogan: In relation to the minister's reference to the planning being undertaken, we are working very closely with colleagues in the Department of Education and Training and the Australian government to look at the available data—both the demographic data and the data available through the Helping Families Initiative of the Australian government—to give us a detailed picture of the incidence of autism across Queensland. That guides our advice to government about the provision of services on a state-wide basis.

Mr RYAN: Minister, I refer to page 3-5 of the SDS. I would like to know what therapy support is available throughout Queensland for children with a disability.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for his question. As I said, early intervention is one of our key priorities. Earlier this month, I officially opened the renovated Sunshine Coast Children's Therapy Centre in Nambour. This centre does a great job supporting local children with a disability and their families. It provides for early intervention services, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language pathology, in addition to family support and counselling.

Last year the government provided the centre with \$746,000 in funding, including \$175,000 for the renovation. I can remember when the director, Frank, approached me and said, 'Minister, we've actually got the community on board. We've raised the \$300,000 we need for the renovations but we can't complete it because we have hit this shortfall.' We were able to provide that funding so the centre was able to be completed. The centre is amazing. I met with the families there on the day. They were very enthusiastic about the supports their children were receiving. It was good to see the community participating. They really got behind the centre because they know the benefits it is bringing to children.

There are other Queensland NGOs that are also delivering therapy services to children. Among them is the Cerebral Palsy League, providers of autism services, MontroseAccess and Cootharinga up in Townsville. In 2010-11, our Family and Early Childhood Services will deliver therapy and support services to around 2,000 Queensland children right across the state. I have personally sat with some families at our Ipswich centre and I have seen firsthand the wonderful job our dedicated therapy specialists deliver. Centres provide a range of therapy services to children in regions right across Queensland. Our specialist staff work with families and their children using a family centred approach. Services and supports are planned to meet the unique needs of each child and their family. These important services are provided via a whole range of therapists—physiotherapists, psychologists, social workers—and this is backed up with funding of \$7.1 million with an army of occupational therapists et cetera.

Last financial year, our \$3 million children with a physical disability program supported more than 450 children. Through this program, we are working with non-government service organisations to provide specialist support to children aged eight and under who have high support needs. It provides therapy support, information, referral services and funding to purchase aids and equipment. We are getting on with the job of supporting Queensland children with a disability and their families. We will continue to invest in the services that families need to give their children the very best start in life.

Mr WELLS: I refer the minister to pages 3-5 and 3-9 of the SDS and to her earlier remarks about children with disabilities leaving school. This is an area that has been crying out for some attention. One of the transitions that is particularly menacing to parents of children with disabilities is the transition from school to whatever is beyond. Can the minister tell us a bit more about what she is now doing in that area?

Ms PALASZCZUK: As I mentioned earlier, we want to give young adults more opportunities when they leave school. Through Disability Services's Post School Services Program, young school leavers can experience opportunities to build relationships, experience recreational activities, enhance social networks, strengthen communication skills, enhance daily living and life skills, and transition to work and further study options.

CHAIR: Minister, the time for government questions has expired. I now call the member for Hinchinbrook.

Mr CRIPPS: I refer to page 3-20 of the SDS and note that, in relation to service category 6, the number of meals provided in 2010-11 was 53,676 more than was estimated in last year's budget papers—more than a thousand extra meals a week—and that the target for the 2010-11 year is 26,904 more than what was estimated in 2009-10. There is obviously a growing demand for this service in the Queensland community as our population grows, ages and exhibits higher levels of disability. Will the minister please advise if she is confident our volunteer Meals on Wheels providers have the capacity to meet the growing demand for these services? Alternatively, what arrangements has the minister put in place to ensure that community demand for this extremely important service can be met?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member for the question. It is a very important question. The volunteers out there who work in Meals on Wheels do an amazing job. I have been to a number of organisations across the state, and what has struck me is that these people give up their time so freely and willingly to help other people. Some people give up more than one day a week—some people are doing it three or four times a week—to make sure these meals are delivered.

In terms of our budget allocation for 2010-11, we have an estimated budget of approximately \$5.5 million and, as the member was saying, that is over two million meals. That is a lot of meals and a lot of services that are going out there. This is a great program. It is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the state through the HACC program, Home and Community Care. I think people would agree with me that Meals on Wheels is absolutely one of our best known community organisations. Queensland is very unique when it comes to Meals on Wheels because Queensland has a lot of kitchens and the meals are prepared locally in the kitchens. What has happened is that the other states have tended to go towards the mass production of frozen meals. We have been able to continue the service as was initially intended, and I think that is very important.

I recently allocated a round of funding for capital upgrades, for infrastructure—for things such as upgrading freezers and upgrading kitchens if there needed to be some modifications. Applications were received and they are in the final stages, so there will be some more money going out the door in the very near future. I am quite sure there are a lot of organisations out there who will be very happy with that outcome.

In relation to your question about whether or not we think we can continue to meet the needs of the growing population, yes, I do think we can because the Commonwealth does actually allocate some growth funds. Where there is some more demand, we can look at those growth funds and reallocate accordingly. It is a very, very important organisation. It is essential that we continue to deliver this program and I am committed to it. I am also committed to recognising the volunteers right across the state. As I go to the different regions I drop in to the Meals on Wheels centres and I give certificates of appreciation to the volunteers, because I think it is important that we recognise the time they give up. It is nice to sit down and have a cup of tea with them and hear their stories.

Mr CRIPPS: Following on from that question and in respect of the minister's answer to question on notice No. 344 in which the minister claims assistance is being provided to Meals on Wheels providers across the state to meet high food safety standards, including the employment of a food safety officer, notwithstanding this assistance, the minister has been made aware of significant concerns expressed by Meals on Wheels providers regarding the complexity and cost of compliance in respect of the state government's new Home and Community Care service agreements. I table parts A, B and C of those new agreements. What action has the minister taken to address the complaints made by Meals on Wheels providers across the state in respect of this new bureaucratic red tape? I also table letters from the Pomona and District Meals on Wheels to their local members and the Western Suburbs Meals on Wheels to the minister in regard to their concerns.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is a very important question and one which I have addressed as minister. When I heard that there were some issues around Meals on Wheels meeting the requirements they now have to meet under the national food standards, I immediately had a meeting with the CEO and we put in extra resources to ensure that they would be able to fill out those forms. I appreciate the question on notice that you refer to—No. 344. As I mentioned in the answer to you, the Queensland Food Act incorporates requirements of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. The code aims to ensure the health and safety of clients in receipt of food services, particularly those over 70 years and people who have immunity issues, by ensuring that their food is up to the right standard. What we need to address here is that, essentially, these are Australian food standards. I think it is actually beneficial to the clients if they know what is in the containers when they receive their food. They are now labelled. I think they are high standards but they are necessary standards.

Mr CRIPPS: It is a lot of red tape for volunteers.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is why we are putting in place things which will help these organisations, and I have met with them. I sat down with some of the Meals on Wheels organisations when I met with the member for Maryborough in his office. That is when it was first brought to my attention. They said, 'We have this huge number of forms we have to fill in.' I said, 'I have not heard about this before. Let me get straight to the bottom of it.' I called the people in and I directed my department to do something as quickly as possible.

We sat down with them to explore options to further support providers, especially with respect to managing the financial costs of complying with the food safety standards. We provided some extra staff to help them to make sure they could comply. In May this year I met with Deb Tape, the chief executive officer of Queensland Meals on Wheels, to discuss the range of compliance and reporting requirements that volunteers had to address. I can advise that I recommended also to my federal counterpart, Justine Elliot, that additional funding be allocated to employ extra regional support officers to assist and support Meals on Wheels providers. We are waiting to hear on that, but I am quite sure that announcement will be forthcoming. Once again, that will actually help them comply with those food standards.

Mr CRIPPS: I refer to page 3-5 of the SDS in relation to the delivery of early intervention services for children with autism spectrum disorders. In its 2007 report, the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders could not use Queensland's figures because DSQ did not keep ASD specific statistics. While there have been promises to undertake needs based mapping, to date there has been no database or breakdown of ASD specific statistics or for any other specific disabilities. How is the minister so confident that Disability Services Queensland's budgeting process can meet the needs of children with autism spectrum disorders when there is no system of allocating funds according to needs?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The premise of your question is not actually correct. We have realised the significance of children with autism, and that is why we have an autism initiative. That was started a few years ago, and the government has continued its priority of early intervention for children with a disability, especially in relation to autism. I believe that Queensland is leading the way in relation to this. We are doing needs based mapping. With that needs based mapping—

Mr CRIPPS: Now?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Now. With that needs based mapping, we will be able to determine the need for autism services. So we will be capturing that data.

Mr CRIPPS: Now we are?

Ms PALASZCZUK: We are capturing that data

CHAIR: I think the minister is answering the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, if you could just give me some time. Thank you, Chair. We are leading the way with this. The Commonwealth government has also picked up that this is important, and you will see that it is now directing more and more funding into autism as well.

My responsibility is early intervention for children with autism until they reach school age. Once they are in the school system, that is a matter for the Minister for Education. I am quite sure that the education system has its own method of collecting that data, but in relation to my portfolio we are very conscious of working out the need that is out there. What I am seeing is a growing need. We are making sure that we are talking with Autism Queensland and with AEIOU to ensure they can deliver to where the need is the highest. As I have said previously, we have been looking at the regional centres but we do now need to sit down and see where in those rural, remote areas there is a need and how we can extend our services.

As I was saying earlier—and I did not get a chance to finish—AEIOU is in the process of setting up a service on the Sunshine Coast. With that Sunshine Coast service it is looking at providing outreach to Gympie and outreach to Hervey Bay. Where it is setting up a centre, it is looking at outreach services to make sure that neighbouring areas do not miss out. Autism Queensland in Cairns is providing outreach up to the cape and out to the Tablelands. We are in regular communication with the major providers, which is Autism Queensland and AEIOU. But I also recognise there are some other small providers out there as well, and we need to ensure that we utilise their services to deliver in their communities where it is needed.

Mr CRIPPS: I refer to page 27 of the Capital Statement, which shows expenditure to 30 June 2010 on the redevelopment of infrastructure at Wacol was \$942,000. Last year's Capital Statement budgeted \$3.4 million to be spent in the 2009-10 financial year on this project. This is an underspend of 72½ per cent. Earlier this year the Bligh government extended the transition period for the use of restrictive practices by nine months. Will the minister please advise to what extent the extension of the transition period for the use of restrictive practices was necessary because the Bligh government has failed to progress initiatives implementing Carter report recommendations such as the redevelopment of the accommodation units at Wacol?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for the question. Once again, he is not accurate in what he is saying but I am prepared to give him the whole picture. Do you want the whole picture?

Mr CRIPPS: Go ahead.

Ms PALASZCZUK: In relation to the Carter report, 80 per cent of the recommendations are complete. In relation to our capital infrastructure, we are well on track. The member for Hinchinbrook may recall that we went out to Wacol early in my term to have a look at the plans for the redevelopment of the villas and also for the construction of the forensic unit. I was out there this week and I can tell the member for Hinchinbrook that the structures are basically all up. In fact, the majority of that construction will be complete by October this year, but I am happy to give you the full picture so we can be very clear that we are well on track to delivering this very important commitment. In fact, I see this as one of our most fundamental commitments, because it is dealing with our most complex and challenging clients who have a disability.

I do want to make special mention of the fact that the department is doing an exceptional job not just in delivering on capital infrastructure but also in delivering on the requirements under the legislation in dealing with the non-government sector to ensure that it is fully compliant and ready by the start-up date of October.

In relation to capital infrastructure, I want to refer to the Positive Futures accommodation. In relation to Positive Futures, I can say that the total cost of this initiative is \$47 million. Let me tell you what this comprises so we can be very clear. I think the committee needs to be very clear about this. It is going to be comprising 16 refurbished villas. They have been completed—tick. The Wacol villas have been completed. Sixteen forensic and transitional beds at Wacol were commenced in 2009-10. They will be completed this year in October-November. Thirty new transitional beds in regional locations and Wacol including 16 planned for completion in 2011 at Wacol will be completed, and 14 will be completed in 2011-12. There are regional places which will be built in Maryborough and around Nambour. The funding also enables the purchase of the land in regional locations. In terms of our capital infrastructure, our capital spend on this Carter plan is all underway, it is fully committed and it is going to be fully expended.

Mr McLINDON: Minister, in reference to page 3-7 of the Service Delivery Statements, I note that a proactive coordinated planning approach is being coordinated by Housing and Homelessness Services in conjunction with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services to deliver better housing opportunities for Indigenous communities. Minister, can you please outline any investigations and programs being implemented in this budget by Disability Services in conjunction with Housing and Homelessness Services to identify and treat mental illnesses in homeless individuals in order to provide better housing for the mentally disabled?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I just want to be clear on your question. Are you talking about housing for people who have a—

Mr McLindon interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Okay. As I stated previously in my opening statement, about 46 per cent of all the social housing that has been built—which is the responsibility of the Minister for Housing—is accommodation for people who have a disability. At times, of course, sometimes people will have a mental illness and some of that housing will go to them as well, depending on the circumstances of each particular case.

In relation to young people with mental health issues, I am very pleased to talk about the time-out houses, which you may or may not be familiar with. This is targeted at young people aged between 15 and 25, and it is for two houses. This is a trial. The Queensland Alliance came to us and we sat down with Jeff Cheverton, who said, 'I want to trial this. I think it is a great idea where young people who just need that extra support, that extra care, can go to a place where they are safe and secure, where they do not have to worry, where they can be cared for and looked after rather than having to go into a hospital.' This is like an early intervention method to enable the best supports to be around them.

We have progressed this initiative quite well. We announced it in last year's budget. We now have a house in Cairns and a house at Logan, and we have now selected the NGO that will be delivering that service. Can I say the sector is very excited by this, because if it does work it means we can look at supporting more of the community mental health sector and providing more and more houses. What you have raised is a very important issue. It is one that we are looking at. It is one that we are continuing to address. The specific line item that you refer to in the SDS, the homeless strategy, falls under the portfolio of my colleague the Minister for Housing. I am happy to pass that on to her to get some more comments for you in relation to that.

Mr CRIPPS: I refer to page 27 of the Capital Statement, which shows the total budgeted capital expenditure in 2010-11 at \$39.9 million. The minister will be aware of the circumstances of the community based disability support service provider Granite Belt Support Services in Stanthorpe and its ongoing struggle to secure capital funding support to construct a therapy and respite centre. Granite Belt Support Services delivers support services to communities on the southern Darling Downs in a wide range of areas, especially to children with conditions as diverse as acquired brain injuries, autism and Down syndrome. Why yet again, Minister, is a small regional service provider finding it hard to obtain support from DSQ? Will the minister give an undertaking to meet with Granite Belt Support Services?

CHAIR: Minister, you have about a minute.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think the member may have missed my announcement that I made this week. I have allocated a million dollars in the region. It is budgeted for, it is part of other capital here, and I think that the Granite Belt will have a great opportunity. I did meet with representatives, as you recall, at the post-budget breakfast. We listened to them and acknowledged that there is a growing need in that south-west region and they are eligible to apply for the funding.

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

Ms MALE: I have two questions in relation to page 3-3 of the SDS about supporting Queensland families. Firstly, would the minister outline how families who have a member with a disability can be assisted through respite?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for her question. Respite services provide an important support for family carers by giving them the opportunity to take time out from their caring role. Regular and timely breaks can replenish carers and, as a result, strengthen their ability to care for their family member with a disability. In recognition of the critical role of respite in supporting families, the Queensland government has significantly increased respite funding over the last 10 years. In 2010-11, as I stated earlier, over \$40 million in funding will help continue to deliver respite services across Queensland—an increase of over \$4 million compared to the last financial year. A strong commitment to respite services makes good sense. It keeps families together longer and when used creatively can enhance the skills and community connections of the person with a disability.

As I travel around the state, and you probably know this from your own local area, too, so many times families come up and say, 'If we could just have a couple of hours break a week, it would mean so much to our family.' In my own electorate I have had families come up to me and say that they have

never had a break; they have never had a holiday. I say to them, 'Did you know that there is some respite funding available?' A lot of times people do not even know that it is out there. This huge injection of funding is part of our budget. Whenever there is a need, I think we need to try as much as possible to get more respite funding because it does make a difference to families in so many ways.

As I mentioned earlier with the Action Plan for Children with a Disability, we will be spending \$12.7 million over the next three years to provide specialist disability services to children with a disability and \$1.3 million in 2010-11 to support approximately 108 additional children and families with respite services. Once again, it is not just for the adults; it is for the children as well. We are once again targeting specifically a clear priority with that action plan and making sure that respite services are available.

Earlier this month I announced an additional \$2.7 million boost to respite care for 17 service providers targeting older carers of people with a disability. This will benefit more than 200 extra people state-wide. A key focus of this funding is respite effect services which not only give carers a well-deserved break but, as I mentioned earlier, will build the skills. Funding of \$1.7 million was allocated from the disability assistance package to 12 service providers across the state. This provides a range of activities that build independent living skills. Family members of ageing carers are a priority for this support. Examples of these respite effect activities are cooking classes, money management courses at the local TAFE, public transport training, and community volunteering.

I was also very impressed with the broad range of skill-building opportunities provided in the community when opening the new MADEC service in Mackay. This is a \$1.1 million investment on the part of the Bligh government towards the construction of a new centre, once again providing respite for families.

Ms MALE: Secondly, I would like to know what is being done to assist family members throughout Queensland who are deaf?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I know your interest in this. I know your passion for this area. I am pleased to talk about what Disability Services is doing to support the deaf community and their families. Hearing disability is a significant issue. The ageing population is expected to increase the proportion of people with hearing loss to one in four by 2050.

Disability Services funds a number of non-government organisations to provide information, counselling and training in managing hearing loss and language services to people with a hearing disability. During 2009-10 the Queensland government provided a total of \$2.06 million in funding for specialist services for deaf and hearing impaired people across the state. A breakdown of this funding allocation consists of \$1.47 million in recurrent funding, which is provided to three service providers—Better Hearing Australia Brisbane Inc., Deaf Services Queensland and the Hear and Say Centre for deaf children—and \$590,000 in non-recurrent funding to Strengthening Non-Government Organisations to enhance the quality of the service delivery and establish new initiatives to meet the gaps in service provision for the deaf and hearing impaired community.

It is also pleasing to advise that these funds have been used to establish two new service responses. They are the development of a service centre in Townsville and a support and interpreting, translating and communication program. Townsville's deaf community sent a very clear message to us that there was a real need for stronger deaf services. We recognised the need and the local members raised this with me on several occasions. I was very pleased to recently announce \$140,000 in funding to help Deaf Services Queensland establish a local service in Townsville.

People were so overwhelmed with this announcement that on the day families were crying. They said, 'We never thought that we would actually see this service in Townsville.' It is when those small things happen that you know you are doing the right thing. It is not a huge amount of money but it helps deliver a vital service that is changing people's lives. That comes back to my opening address where I said that we want to change people's lives. We want to give them choice and independence. This is about giving them independence. I was really pleased to do that.

I have had a lot of communication with Brett Casey, the acting CEO. He is doing a wonderful job there. They also have a brilliant translation service. They are actually doing translations not just for hearing impaired people but also for the multicultural community, which I will probably talk about later on this afternoon. So once again we are diversifying and multiskilling.

I wanted to remind the committee that the National Week of Deaf People is 9-15 October this year. The deaf community will be visiting parliament on 6 October. We look forward to their visit on that day.

CHAIR: I actually want to reference SDS page 3-5 because it refers to more assistance for people with a spinal cord injury—one of the other injuries where people require assistance. Will the minister outline the Queensland government's response to spinal cord injuries?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sure. It is a very important issue. It is also a very important initiative which we as a government are continuing to prioritise. In 2010-11 the Queensland government is continuing its strong support. We have demonstrated this through an additional recurrent allocation of \$3.2 million to

the Spinal Cord Injuries Response Initiative for direct support to more people with a spinal cord injury. This funding will increase to \$8.2 million in the following three years to assist people with a spinal cord injury to fully participate in their community.

This year marked the golden anniversary of the Spinal Injuries Association of Queensland. This is its 50th year of service to people in Queensland. Spinal injury can happen to anyone at any time. In Queensland around 90 spinal cord injuries are sustained every year. Around 40 per cent of these injuries occur as a result of road trauma, falls or water accidents. The Queensland government is also providing more than \$2 million towards research into future rehabilitation and treatment of spinal cord injuries.

The Spinal Cord Injuries Response Initiative is a positive example of a coordinated approach to service delivery involving government and non-government partners. The Department of Communities' disability services, housing and homelessness services, Queensland Health and the Spinal Injuries Association work collaboratively to meet the needs of people with a spinal cord injury in Queensland. Through integrated service delivery, clients are able to access personal care support, priority social housing, home modifications and aids and equipment on their discharge from hospital.

This initiative is about transitioning people from hospital after they have gone through their rehabilitation back into their community. When I was in Mackay recently I met with the Mackay and District Spinal Injuries Association. They are doing wonderful work in terms of rehabilitating people back into their regional communities. I think it is very important that they share a part of this money as well. It is not just about moving people out of the PA Hospital; it is about moving people back to their local communities, where they have the support of their family and the support of their friends, where they know their local shopping centre and they know how to get around. This is such an important program. I think it is one that even the opposition would continue to support. It is such a worthy initiative. It is changing people's lives and it is making a real difference.

The Spinal Injuries Association also runs a very successful program call SEAT. They go into schools and educate young children about how spinal injury can happen to anyone at any time. I think this is a very important educational initiative and one that my department is very pleased to contribute to.

Mr RYAN: My question refers to page 3-5 of the SDS and the expansion of the Community Living Initiative. Can the minister please inform the committee just what this initiative has achieved and how it will expand?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much. This is a great new initiative and one that I am very passionate about. It has been implemented in my term as minister and I want to see it continue. The Community Living Initiative is a very proactive and preventative measure that helps plan for their future. I was delighted to launch this new initiative on International Day of People with a Disability on 3 December 2009.

The Community Living Initiative assists adults with a disability to transition from their parent carers to a place of their own well before families experience an emergency or a crisis. Carers of people with a disability welcome this initiative as it avoids uncertainty and takes the worry out of future years. Through this initiative we are encouraging people with disabilities, in conjunction with their families, to carefully plan and develop the essential components of a good lifestyle for themselves.

This initiative recognises that it takes more than funded disability support to achieve a good lifestyle for a person with a disability. It is essentially what our 10-year action plan is all about. It is about creating more inclusive communities and allowing people independence and choice about where they live.

The other essential ingredients are having a network of family and friends living close by. For many people with a disability, achieving this complete lifestyle requires a shared contribution from family, community and government. The Community Living Initiative acknowledges that the best person to make decisions about where I am going to live, who I am going to live with and how my support is going to be provided is the person with the disability and their family. Identifying a clear vision for the future, building the person's support network, ensuring safeguards are in place and then making it actually happen requires a great deal of thought and planning.

Before applying for funded support from the Community Living Initiative, people are encouraged to explore the wide variety of ways people with disabilities can receive support to live their chosen lifestyle. To assist people interested in this initiative, a number of resources are made available that provide inspirational stories and information on many models of community living that exist for a person with a disability. In recognition of the central role of people with disabilities and their families in developing their own support arrangements, the Community Living Initiative also strongly supports people directing these arrangements on an ongoing basis if they choose to do so.

In 2009-10 funding of \$1 million was allocated to the Community Living Initiative. Within the first six months of implementing this program 28 people received funded support to transition to a home of their own in their community. It is estimated that after 12 months up to 50 will have been supported by this program.

Local area coordinators provide intensive planning and community development activities prior to funding for ongoing accommodation and support arrangements being requested from the Community Living Initiative. In regional and remote areas where the local area coordination model operates, the Community Living Initiative is very well received. In the metropolitan areas of South-East Queensland where local area coordinators do not operate, Disability Services has provided funding of \$500,000 to Queenslanders with Disability Network Inc. to employ enablers to assist people plan their transition to independent community living. In 2010-11 an additional \$1 million has been allocated to the Community Living Initiative. This funding will assist up to 50 more people to set up their own community living arrangement.

The Community Living Initiative is a particularly exciting development for Queensland. It significantly expands the number of accommodation support options available and shifts the focus from emergency response to carefully planned transitions for people with a disability. I am pleased to be able to support adults with a disability to make planned transitions from parent carers and continue to be involved in the community.

Mr RYAN: Along with, I am sure, a number of other members of the committee, I am an owner of some of the artwork done by the good people at Multicap. My question refers to page 3-2 of the SDS and particularly what the government is doing to assist with the activities of Multicap, in particular the work of the Monte Lupo art centre and the use of the new site at Mount Ommaney.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am very pleased to speak to you about the valuable work of Multicap. Multicap is a leading disability services provider that supports people with multiple disabilities and challenging and complex behaviours, their families and carers in Queensland. Like the member for Morayfield, I have quite a selection of artwork, having been down to Logan, where they have their store. I have actually met the people who are involved with doing the artwork. They recently had a display at Parliament House.

CHAIR: Me, too.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am quite sure a lot of members not only visited the display but also were absolutely amazed at the talent of these young people. We need to continue to develop their talent. I have had discussions with the CEO, Jo Jessop. She is very keen to next year maybe broaden her horizons and not just look at Parliament House. We are actually in discussions with the State Library so see whether they can exhibit works at the State Library. They are very excited about that.

Multicap provides a range of disability services, including accommodation support—through a mix of homes owned by the department, Multicap owned houses and private rentals—and day and post school services at Petrie, Nudgee and the new site at Mount Ommaney, which I opened with the member for Mount Ommaney, Mrs Julie Attwood. That is a great centre as well. Many people will remember that the centre was formerly known as Zoe's Place. Multicap has now come in there. It is going to provide a great range of day activities and post school services for young people exiting local regions but also exiting the Centenary special school. It was great to meet the families there on that day.

Multicap also provides centre based respite services on the Gold Coast and at Logan, west Brisbane and Rockhampton; overnight centre based service for older carers at Marsden and Carseldine; and social support including holiday options, Multicap dances, a children's choir, a support group for 18- to 30-year-olds and the southside singers choir. In total, Disability Services provides Multicap with \$10 million each year across Queensland to deliver respite accommodation, education and other support services for people with a disability.

We are also working closely with Multicap to achieve better outcomes for clients by offering client centred integrated services. We talked about Monte Lupo in great detail. Their therapy program is an active session lasting 1½ hours. Its objective is to stimulate the participants physically and mentally to enhance their lifestyle. A few of the most obvious benefits of its art therapy program are social awareness for the people involved, personal expression and of course improved communication skills. It is a wonderful organisation that is doing great work right throughout Queensland.

CHAIR: Mention is made of non-government providers on page 3-2 of the SDS such as the great Cerebral Palsy League in my electorate. Can you please tell the committee how the government is supporting non-government providers who assist children with cerebral palsy?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much, and I know your commitment to the cerebral palsy association. We allocate quite a bit of money to the Cerebral Palsy League. It does amazing work, especially for children. I have spoken about the action plan for children. Three organisations—Cerebral Palsy League, MontroseAccess and Sunshine Coast Children's Therapy Centre—receive funding through our early intervention strategy aimed at young children aged zero to eight. The Cerebral Palsy League has a very key focus on early intervention. It provides targeted services to children at a young age when support is fundamental. It proactively works with families when a child is born with cerebral palsy to provide them with information networks with other parents, support services, equipment and early intervention services.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The question time for government members has expired.

Mr CRIPPS: Page 125 of the Capital Statement shows \$53.8 million spent to 30 June 2010 on Citytrain Disability Standards 2007 Compliance. Page 128 of the 2009-10 Capital Statement shows \$60.9 million budgeted to be expended on Citytrain Disability Standards 2007 Compliance by 30 June 2010. This indicates that there has been an underspend of \$7.1 million. While I acknowledge and I understand that this is outside the minister's portfolio, you will understand my interest in this issue given its importance to increasing access to public transport for people with disabilities. I simply ask: is the minister aware of the underspend? Has she made any inquiries with her colleague the transport minister as to the reason for the underspend? What impact will it have on achieving compliance with disability access standards on Citytrain services?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for his question, but it is actually in the portfolio of the Minister for Transport. The Minister for Transport was questioned in detail yesterday about her budget. I do recognise that access issues are very important to people with a disability. There are plans which all departments must give to us to talk about what they are doing in relation to disability. They are called disability service plans. I keep an eye on what is happening across the departments in relation to employment to ensure that departments are employing people with a disability. I know in my own department we have checked the figures and they are quite good, as is our employment of people from multicultural backgrounds as well.

In relation to your specific question, I am more than happy to speak with the Minister for Transport. I will discuss one issue with you. I know a lot of people raised with me issues in relation to people with a disability using a go card. They had some issues in relation to that. We were able to speak to the Minister for Transport and Transport has made some amendments there to make it easier for people who cannot use the go card. I am often in discussions with the minister about different things. In relation to your specific issue, people can raise access issues as part of the 10-year plan. One of our priorities there is about having accessible places, and transport is one of the themes in our 10-year plan. So it is on our list of priorities. As I mentioned previously, all departments have to provide disability services plans to my department.

Mr CRIPPS: I thank the minister for her efforts to answer my question in that regard. I refer to page 27 of the Capital Statement and the allocation of \$660,000 in the 2010-11 financial year for community mental health. I refer also to the minister's media statement of 24 June 2010 announcing \$1.5 million of funding to improve community mental health services on the Sunshine Coast whereby funding will be provided to Gold Coast based FSG Australia to deliver peer support services. Will the minister advise what service infrastructure FSG Australia currently has established on the Sunshine Coast? How many locally based community mental health services were approached by DSQ to deliver these peer support programs, and why were they deemed unable to deliver these peer support programs on the Sunshine Coast?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much for your question in relation to the allocation of the funding in the capital works program on page 27 of the Capital Statement. The total cost of this initiative over four years is \$6.8 million. The community mental health capital works initiative is a rolling four-year initiative. This expenditure has provided 14 places for accommodation and support for people experiencing mental illness through the acquisition of six existing dwellings in 2009-10, for the Transitional Recovery Program and also for the consumer operator program. To date, a total of \$3.14 million has been expended.

In relation to the 2010-11 budget, we have allocated, as you mentioned, \$660,000, and what will this do? This will enable us to purchase two blocks of land for the construction of two by five-bedroom duplexes in Logan for the Transitional Recovery Program and the refurbishment of two dwellings in Mount Gravatt which were previously purchased. So they will be refurbished over 2010-11. The initiative will be completed in 2011-12 and to date six projects have been completed and two are underway. In relation to your specific question in relation to FSG on the Sunshine Coast, \$554,000 was provided to FSG Australia to deliver consumer operated services. What happened on the Sunshine Coast? It was an open and competitive tender process. I might just ask the director-general if she would explain this tender process.

Ms Apelt: In terms of the open tender process, there were in excess of 10 applications. The assessment panel included experts from Queensland Health, consumer care representatives and also regional departmental staff. All applications were assessed against agreed and advertised criteria and FSG won the competitive process.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I might just add in conclusion that FSG does do a very good job. I have met with it on the Gold Coast. It is doing terrific work and just because it was initially centred on the Gold Coast does not mean that it cannot deliver a very good service on the Sunshine Coast.

Mr CRIPPS: Minister, while the assistance to non-government organisations to deal with wage increases is absent from this year's budget, it was a significant allocation in the 2009-10 budget. Many smaller NGOs in certain categories missed out on assistance and are struggling to meet the cost of wages following the QIRC decision. In the same period staff within the department of Disability Services

Queensland increased by 202. What assistance is available to NGOs that missed out on the \$414 million fund allocation and are now struggling to stay open and continue delivering their services to people with disabilities?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I remember we discussed this quite extensively last year. As you will recall, one of the largest single injections of funds that the Treasurer made was in relation to the funding out to the NGO sector. In fact, in relation to the supplementary funding to the disability sector, I recall that a large proportion of that money has actually gone to the disability sector and it is mainly for the wage supplementation of those front-line service delivery workers—people out there who are in the key service delivery areas doing vital work. So about 45 per cent of the funds were allocated to disability services. I can advise the committee that 95 per cent of those funds which were allocated over the last financial year are out the door. My colleagues the Minister for Child Safety and the Minister for Housing and I have also written to all of the NGOs to let us know how that money was spent. I can also advise that the vast majority of respondent organisations have fully expended this money and the funds demonstrate our government's commitment to the role of community services in supporting individuals, families and communities. The community services sector is a significant contributor to the Queensland economy through its substantial provision of jobs, the economic and social value of work performed by volunteers as well as a substantial contribution to the state's social infrastructure and community wellbeing.

In relation to your question about what other funding did NGOs receive, you will recall that at the post-budget breakfast organised by NDS and the Queensland Alliance I actually announced that as part of the budget there was indexation of 3.25 per cent. That was very well received by the sector. It was something that it was wanting to know about. In addition, the Department of Communities was always working with the NGO sector to see how we could deliver more sustainable services.

Mr McLINDON: Minister, my question is in relation to hydrotherapy pools. The Boonah community in the Beaudesert electorate, which is a small township of about 2,500 people, has raised over \$400,000 in the last five years, and this was implemented for the elderly and disabled. Given that we have an ageing population, which brings with it an increase in associated disabilities, is there any funding allocated in this budget to contribute towards the construction of hydrotherapy pools in the Queensland community, possibly in conjunction with Queensland Health?

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is actually a very good question. I do recognise that your electorate is quite a large area. I know that there is a hydrotherapy complex in Boonah that was opened in May of this year which is being well utilised by members of the community and that demand has exceeded initial expectations. So, yes, you have raised a very valid point that, with our ageing population, we definitely need to ensure that we have the necessary supports and services. It is something that I am more than happy to look at in the future.

Mr CRIPPS: I would note that an answer the minister gave earlier that the infrastructure redevelopment at Wacol has been completed is not supported by the budget papers, which indicate that \$7.1 million is due to be spent on that project post 2010-11. However, I note that page 3-9 of the SDS indicates that \$25.6 million was spent on Positive Futures during 2009-10. Despite this expenditure, the minister would be aware that non-government organisations continue to express serious concerns about the lack of financial support to assist them implementing the recommendations of the Carter report. Page 3-5 of the SDS indicates that a further \$23 million will be spent on Positive Futures in 2010-11. Will the minister advise if this expenditure will be enough to support these NGOs implement the recommendations of the Carter report in respect of the ongoing use of restrictive practices?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, because this gives me an opportunity to continue the discussion that we were having earlier in relation to the finalisation of the master plan and the capital works. I did not say that all of the capital works had been completed. I said—

Mr CRIPPS: You said Wacol had been completed—'tick'.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No. I said the villas had been completed—tick—and I said that the forensic unit will be completed in September/October this year—that is exactly what I said—and that there was some housing which was also being built in the regions to complement the Carter report. I said that 80 per cent of the recommendations have been completed, but now I want to turn to your issue which we did not get a chance to address in relation to the support that we are providing to the non-government sector in relation to meeting its legislative requirements.

We have had discussions about this in the House. The legislative requirements mean that the NGOs need to have their plans in place and ready by October. Have we given the NGOs the support they need? Yes, I believe we have given them the support and we are continuing to work with them very, very closely in this regard. As at 30 June, it is estimated that there will be approximately 600 plans that will be required for adults under this Carter initiative. My department is continuing to work closely with non-government service providers to support them to achieve these legislative requirements. Specialist response service teams in 12 regional locations are providing specialist clinical services to their clients and support to non-government service providers. To date, the new regional specialist teams have provided more than 50,000 service hours to more than 380 clients.

In terms of budget allocation, in 2009-10 we have given \$2.4 million to 41 service providers. Some issues were raised with Endeavour, and you will recall that that was raised at the post budget breakfast and we have addressed their issues. So if there are other NGOs out there that need extra support they should talk to us, because the legislative requirement does mean that all of these plans need to be completed and they must be completed by the end of September. It is a very important part of the initiative—part of the Carter reforms—and it is changing people's lives. It really is. Initially we thought there were going to be a lot more plans, but the NGOs are realising that sometimes people's circumstances change as well.

Mr CRIPPS: No further extensions to the transition period?

CHAIR: No, that is enough.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No. We just have to work with them to make sure—

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. The time allocated for questions by non-government members has expired. I call the member for Murrumbidgee.

Mr WELLS: I refer to page 3-19 of the SDS, and I ask: given that a lot of people who have disabilities prefer to remain at home, what is the government doing to assist them with that obviously socially beneficial program?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Across Queensland in 2010-11 we are investing \$528.7 million to strengthen the Home and Community Care service. This is an increase of \$44.4 million in 2009-10 and includes \$29.6 million provided by the Commonwealth government. This program is a joint partnership, with funds coming from both the Commonwealth and the state.

The Home and Community Care budget specifically targets people with a disability and older Queenslanders. We want to ensure they can remain living independently for as long as possible. The Home and Community Care program also benefits the unpaid carers of people assessed as being eligible for the program. This program is vital. It assists more than 163,000 Queenslanders across the state.

The funding supports 379 organisations delivering services via some 800 outlets across Queensland. These organisations do a wonderful job of supporting these Queenslanders to remain in their own homes and in their own communities. Their services reach into almost every town and community across Queensland, helping older Queenslanders and those with a disability to live independently.

The HACC program also reduces pressures on aged-care facilities. By helping people to avoid entering aged care for longer, it gives people more freedom to enjoy a quality of life among families and friends. The Home and Community Care program is a far-reaching program that has great benefits. Some initiatives specifically target people in rural and regional Queensland and others focus on, for example, people with dementia. Other programs are tailored for those at risk of homelessness and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Shortly I will be announcing a further \$22.5 million funding boost to this initiative with the federal Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot. It will give people help with everyday tasks like mowing the lawn, preparing meals and house cleaning. Nurses and allied health professionals will also deliver more services to people in their own homes, such as administering medication and providing things like podiatry and occupational therapy. There is also new funding for day-centre activities, such as exercise and healthy eating classes, as well as a boost for transport services to help people remain more active in their communities.

This program has a strong track record of delivering services to those who need them the most. I would just like to share briefly with the committee some highlights over the past year. For example, there was \$7.4 million for an extra 210,000 hours of home support, including services such as house cleaning, meal preparation, shopping and personal care; \$2.1 million for coordinated care services for an extra 40,000 hours of comprehensive client assessments and case management; clinical and specialist care was boosted by \$2.9 million; centre based day care was boosted by an extra \$1.5 million; and, of course, there was over \$5 million to 147 Meals on Wheels organisations, which we discussed earlier.

Ms MALE: Minister, what is the expenditure under the Home and Community Care program on both centre based care, as mentioned on page 3-19 of the SDS, and home based respite care?

Ms PALASZCZUK: In 2009-10, 379 organisations were funded to deliver Home and Community Care services. Since October 2009, the federal Minister for Ageing, the Hon. Justine Elliot, and I have announced over \$40 million of new Home and Community Care services right across Queensland. Last year we announced that the Home and Community Care program boosted centre based day care by an extra 195,000 hours of respite. New funding in 2009-10 meant that \$2.79 million brought the total allocation of centre based day care to \$55 million.

I think nearly all members would have a centre based day service in their local electorates. I know in my local electorate the Inala Day Respite Centre just grows and grows. This provides support group activities at a centre located in the community so that people can interact socially with their friends and

peers. It is a way to improve independence and provide respite for carers. These centres provide a wide range of social and recreational activities such as music, exercise and daytrips. In 2010-11 the Home and Community Care program budget for centre based day care will increase to \$56.9 million per year in recurrent funding.

In relation to your question about home based respite care, this is also an essential support service provided to carers to give them relief from their caring role. These carers are highly regarded by the Home and Community Care program as they support people to remain in their own homes and communities, enabling a better quality of life among families and friends. In 2009-10, over \$34 million was allocated for respite care services, allowing for approximately 969,000 hours of respite care. We recognise the considerable demands placed on carers and their dedication to improving the quality of life of our nation's elderly and people with disabilities.

Funding is also provided for counselling and support information and advocacy services specifically for carers across Queensland. We recognise that we have to care for our carers as well and provide counselling, support and information services for them such as support forums, buddy systems, individual counselling services or information to assist carers carry out this vital role. In 2009-10, carers benefited from a \$1.2 million boost to these services to assist them. The extra funding delivered more access to the support services that carers need to care for their loved ones. Of course, we need to recognise the role that Carers Queensland plays. It does an extraordinary job. I meet with them quite regularly and I do not think I can say enough about them. They are just doing such great work out there, and they are always a link that people can ring up for some advice and for the support that they need.

Mr WELLS: My question relates to mental health and page 3-30 of the SDS. Could the minister outline the department's role with respect to broader mental health issues and the significance of the transitional programs mentioned in the SDS?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sure. I thank the member very much for his question. In 2010-11, my department's budget for non-clinical community based mental health services and support is \$28.6 million. We are growing the community based sector to create a better mental health system. People with mental illness can and do recover. My department assists with transitioning people out of acute and extended treatment facilities back into community living. People are supported to live in the community and avoid being hospitalised when it is not necessary. Queensland Health maintains responsibility for people's clinical treatment.

In 2005-06 the Queensland government made a threefold increase in the community mental health sector budget. If we add the Commonwealth government investment in the community mental health sector in Queensland over this same period, we see that there has been an approximate fivefold increase in funding to this sector and to people with mental illness living in the community. In 2009-10 the Queensland government committed \$26.1 million for non-clinical mental health services through the Department of Communities. These funds are allocated to non-government service providers, peak bodies and training institutions to assist people with mental illness to re-engage with and live meaningful lives in their communities.

One of the organisations we fund is the Mental Health Association of Queensland. We provide \$755,000 in recurrent funding to help them deliver education, counselling and support services. I was pleased to be able to officially open their new premises at Annerley in March of this year. The Mental Health Association of Queensland has provided quality early intervention mental health services and programs since 1961. More recently, the association created its own Australian College of Community Services, which builds the skills and knowledge of the health workforce. These new premises at Annerley bring its services together into one central location.

Funds will also be used to help grow the community's awareness of mental health through education and community events. The Bligh government is committed to delivering improved community mental health services. One of the key strategies is our support for transitional recovery programs. In 2010-11, some \$7 million in recurrent grants will support the delivery of three programs: Transitional Recovery, Resident Recovery and the Transition from Correctional Facilities Program. All three programs are joint initiatives with other departments and departmental service areas.

Ms MALE: Minister, what programs and services from the \$28.3 million for mental health services, as mentioned on page 3-10 of the SDS, are involving consumers in the model of service delivery?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much for your question. Queensland is leading the way when it comes to tackling the stigma associated with mental illness. Last month, the Deputy Premier announced \$8.5 million over four years to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness. Mental illness affects one in five Australians, and we have a strong commitment to giving these people the support they need. That is why we will work with the Queensland Alliance on a social marketing campaign to strengthen the social inclusion of people with mental illness.

In 2010-11 we will invest \$1.27 million to provide peer support services for people with a mental illness. Our Consumer Operated Services Program will be delivered by people who have personal experiences of mental illness. They are specifically trained and supported to provide peer assistance to

over 300 people a year. Peer workers undertake training specific to their role and general training through the certificate IV in mental health. Seventy-five peer workers in the non-government sector in Queensland have undertaken a five-day intensive course in peer support in the past two years.

In June I announced more than \$550,000 in funding for FSG Australia to establish an innovative peer support program, as we mentioned earlier, on the Sunshine Coast. FSG estimates that it will be able to support over 200 people with a mental illness on the Sunshine Coast via this program. This includes around 112 people in centre based support, 60 through outreach and 52 through the resident support program. It will include centre based and outreach support from trained peer workers, with a residential service to open in the future. Support from people who have been there is invaluable in breaking down this isolation. The program will deliver one-on-one as well as group programs, a dedicated telephone support line and intensive support in a home-like residential setting as required.

For many people who experience mental illness, unpaid or voluntary work is often the first step in connecting with communities to enter the paid workforce by building skills and confidence. Many support and self-help groups are organised and facilitated by volunteers who experience mental illness. In 2010-11 the Bligh government will provide \$300,000 to Self Help Queensland to continue to support and strengthen over 70 self-help consumer groups across the state. We are providing \$2 million over two years to Social Ventures Australia to help set up businesses whose design and delivery have involved staff with experience of mental illness.

We want to ensure that people with a mental illness have a voice and we see their experience utilised by the NGOs. That is why we support the increasing number of NGOs providing work opportunities for people with a mental illness. We encourage funded mental health community service providers to deliver services underpinned by recovery principles. The recovery orientated framework acknowledges that each individual is an expert on their own life. It acknowledges that recovery involves a partnership between the individual and the organisation supporting them based on their specific life circumstances.

CHAIR: I refer you to page 3-6 of the SDS to an area that I have an interest in and that is where \$1.9 million will be provided this year for the Housing and Support Program. Would the minister advise how many people will be supported through the service and what is the level of support?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for her question. The Housing and Support Program has a track record of helping Queenslanders with a mental illness to move out of intensive treatment facilities with support and live independently in the community. Extra funding in 2010-11 will deliver ongoing accommodation and assistance to at least another 21 people with a psychiatric disability. This funding will bring the total number of people being supported through the program to more than 215. This number will continue to grow as individuals recover from their mental illness and the requirements for support will actually reduce.

This initiative builds on the government's commitment under the COAG National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006-2011. The Housing and Support Program is an example of Queensland government agencies working together to achieve positive outcomes for Queenslanders who have a psychiatric disability.

Disability Services and Housing and Homelessness Services work closely with Queensland Health to implement this initiative. People assisted through the Housing and Support Program receive social housing provided by Housing and Homelessness Services, they receive clinical support from Queensland Health and personal and social support through Disability Services to enable them to live in the community. To achieve this, non-government community mental health service providers are funded to assist people with a level of support which is appropriate to their needs.

CHAIR: The committee will adjourn for a short break and will resume at 4 pm to examine multicultural affairs.

Proceeding suspended from 3.30 pm to 4.00 pm

CHAIR: The hearing of Estimates Committee D is resumed. The committee will continue its examination of the portfolio of the Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs, however, this afternoon focusing on multicultural affairs. The question before the committee is that the proposed expenditure be agreed to and I call the member for Hinchinbrook.

Mr CRIPPS: I refer to page 3-7 of the SDS regarding \$3.4 million in grants supporting a range of programs including 35 positions, 19 in non-government organisations, 15 in local councils and one coordinator hosted by the Local Government Association of Queensland which are designed to improve access to services for people from culturally diverse backgrounds. Last year I asked the minister about the transparency and accountability of these programs. In the last 12 months can the minister advise what reporting has been made available concerning the key performance indicators to measure the effectiveness and outcomes of work undertaken by the individuals in these positions in culturally diverse communities?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for his question. In fact, this is one of the very important aspects of my department of Multicultural Affairs Queensland in relation to getting the funding out to the NGOs in relation to the LAMP and CAMS workers. I have actually attended one of the conferences held for these workers to discuss their ideas and to give them an opportunity to tell me what they are actually doing in their regions. I understand one of our northern members, I think it was the member for Mulgrave, actually attended the most recent state conference, which was very well received as well.

I have asked my department to start taking full reports from the different LAMP and CAMS workers across the state. I think it is very important that as minister I know what they are doing. We have these workers right across the state in most regions. They are providing a very important service. In 2010-11 as part of the partnership program 14 local councils and the Local Government Association of Queensland received a total of \$675,000. This program assists local governments across Queensland to develop culturally inclusive services and initiatives to promote positive community relations. Under the Community Action for a Multicultural Society 17 organisations will receive a total of \$1.334 million. This funding provides 20 community worker positions across the state undertaking advocacy for improved service support for people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

In particular, when you were talking about reports that are provided to me, I actually do have some examples about what the different workers are doing across the state. I would like to thank Garry Page from Multicultural Affairs Queensland who has been gathering this information. For example, I can tell you that the Local Government Association of Queensland held its summit in Cairns between 11 and 13 May—that was the one I referred to earlier. In relation to the Brisbane City Council, which has been developing an internal multicultural reference group for council, they have been reviewing and developing revised interpreter and translator guidelines and they participated in our multicultural policy review.

Across the state different things are happening. For example, in Gladstone they did a survey of industry, business and service providers in the area and found that 81 per cent of respondents would like to have some translating and interpreter service training. That is another good example. There was an interfaith program aimed at building harmonious relationships amongst traditional faith groups. As you can see, there is a requirement that we are getting the information. I could go on further?

CHAIR: Would the member agree to an extension of time?

Mr CRIPPS: Quickly.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is fine. You can move on.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr CRIPPS: I refer to page 3-13 of the SDS which lists the total budget allocation for Multicultural Affairs Queensland at \$9.3 million. According to answer to question on notice No.5 MAQ has allocated \$4 million to purchasing supplies and services, employee expenses and project resources and \$1.9 million to cover the cost of corporate services and expenses. This leaves only \$3.4 million or 40 per cent of MAQ's budget that actually goes towards programs to support Queensland's culturally diverse communities. Is the minister satisfied that 60 per cent of MAQ's budget is spent on the administration of MAQ?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think I will go into this in a bit further detail later but Multicultural Affairs, even though it is a small group within my department, there are multicultural action plans happening right across the state government. Each department will report on how they are delivering towards improving services for people from different backgrounds. In relation to my own portfolio responsibility, a lot of people actually think that MAQ is a huge department, but it is not. It is actually a group of key dedicated workers and I want to put on record how hard they do work. They are always at the local festivals and activities that are held right throughout Brisbane. At the moment they are organising our multicultural festival which will be held in October this year. The member for Brisbane Central attended the citizenship ceremony with me last year. She presided over it. They do a lot of great work out there. They have actually been involved with the development of our multicultural discussion paper. They have been at all the forums right across the state. I just went through with you in detail the funding that goes out to our workers in the councils and the community groups providing linkage services between community groups and the local councils and organisations, understanding what their needs are. In relation to your specifics about the \$4 million and the \$1.9 million, I might ask my director-general, Linda Apelt, if she could explain a bit more of the detail of those funding items for you.

Ms Apelt: As has been noted, the 2010-11 multicultural services budget is \$9.33 million. That is inclusive of \$3.4 million in grants and subsidies primarily relating to the Local Area Multicultural Partnerships, the Community Action for a Multicultural Society, the annual grants round funding for 98 community projects and also funding for the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland. The \$4 million, as noted, is for the supplies and services and employee expenses and also additional project resources that actually support the delivery of specific program initiatives, and the \$1.9 million is for the shared services contribution to leasing costs for Multicultural Affairs Queensland.

In terms of the major programs and initiatives that are delivered for that budget and also the full-time estimates staff, there is the Community Action for a Multicultural Society, the budget for 2010-11 is \$1.334 million; there has been a contribution to interpreter and translation services for the whole-of-government access—

CHAIR: Thank you. Do you want an extension of time?

Mr CRIPPS: No, thank you. I refer to page 3-22 of the SDS which details the service measures undertaken by MAQ. One of those services is the undertaking of the Queensland Multicultural Awards on an annual basis. Minister, I note today that you have announced that nominations are open for the 2010 Multicultural Awards for Queensland. Can the minister advise the winners of the 2009 Queensland Multicultural Awards?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes. Today I announced that there will be awards for this year. We did not actually have the awards last year. We wanted to make sure that we had very clear criteria. I actually revised the criteria for the nominations. They are now out there in the community. I would like to encourage as many people as possible to nominate someone. This year the awards will recognise individuals, education providers, businesses, community organisations, media professionals and government agencies whose outstanding efforts have helped promote the value of multiculturalism and increase social harmony and positive community relations.

I have just announced that the nominations are open. It is very important that people get recognised for the contribution that they are making in their local communities. I have allocated \$50,000 to deliver the 2010 Queensland Multicultural Awards. So there will be awards held this year. It is going to be a very, very significant awards ceremony. I look forward to meeting the winners of this year's awards at the presentation ceremony to be held at Brisbane later this year. I would like to offer you, as the shadow minister, an invitation to attend the awards ceremony.

CHAIR: That is an invitation you cannot refuse. I call the member for Beaudesert.

Mr McLINDON: As you are aware, there are some 161 different cultures in the Logan City and the Scenic Rim region. Can you please outline the community events and any new initiatives in this budget for the Logan and Beaudesert region within Multicultural Affairs?

Ms PALASZCZUK: What I can let you know is that it is a very important region. I have had many discussions with the local members down there. In fact, I recently visited Woodridge with the member for Woodridge, Ms Desley Scott. We actually visited a couple of the service organisations down there. They do an amazing job. I have been down there on several occasions when they have had the big Samoan festival—that is all the Samoan groups that come from right across South-East Queensland. They actually alternate in different years. One year it is in Ipswich, one year it is in Logan. I also attended one when it was held in my electorate area of Richlands. It is a great opportunity—you have probably visited it yourself—for large groups of people to come together to celebrate their culture and also to celebrate and encourage other people in the community to come and experience a bit of their culture.

We have had the announcement this year of the recipients of the \$700,000 of our Multicultural Assistance Program grants. There are a lot of groups that have applied for that. In Logan I can advise that \$6,000 was given to Vision Community Connect. I was hoping that Garry Page might be able to give us a bit more of an explanation in relation to that. Before we go to him, in Woodridge the Ethnic Communities Council of Logan received \$5,000, the Buddhist Society received \$1,500 and the Woodridge Sports and Social Club received \$1,000. What is very good about these grants is that they are actually distributed right across Queensland. The committee makes the recommendations up to myself as the minister. What the committee does is actually try to ensure that there is a good spread of these multicultural programs and festivals happening right across the state. They are not just centred in South-East Queensland, they are right across the state.

Once again we have delivered more activities this year to more community groups so we are making that dollar go a lot further. I would encourage all people to get out there and enjoy as many of these activities as they can.

Mr CRIPPS: Will the Minister please confirm that until 2009 the Queensland Multicultural Awards had been held each year since 1990. Can the minister please confirm her previous answer to the committee that the 2009 Queensland Multicultural Awards were not held because the minister was rewriting the criteria for these awards? Alternatively, can the Minister please advise the committee why the Queensland Multicultural Awards were not held in 2009?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The awards are held this year. They will be held in 2010. When I first became minister, the priority was to get out there to the community a discussion paper for our new multicultural policy. This was the priority. I asked the department to focus primarily on that initiative. So that meant that there would be consultations held right across Queensland, and those consultations have now occurred. I wanted that done first and foremost, and now we are concentrating on the Multicultural Awards. The funds which were allocated for last year have been moved over into the awards for this year. They will be significant awards. People will be recognised. They are going to be a prominent part of the calendar.

Mr CRIPPS: Minister, I refer to page 3-13 of the SDS and your response to question on notice No. 5. How much of the increased budget results from the 15 per cent increase in staffing at Multicultural Affairs Queensland? What roles do these new staff undertake and what is the reason for the projected 70 per cent increase in the supplies and services and employee expenses category of the budget?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much for your question. As the matters that you have discussed relate to staffing of Multicultural Affairs Queensland, I would like to ask my director-general, Linda Apelt, to address that issue for you.

Ms Apelt: The increase in staffing in the 2009-10 actual relates to 2.5 staff that were apportioned across the whole of the Department of Communities to cater for the corporate costs. Also, there was 1.5 staffing that related to a shared arrangement across the whole of the Department of Communities for apportioning corporate costs. So the increase that is reflected in the 2010-11 budget simply relates to the fact that Multicultural Affairs Queensland is part of a larger portfolio and, therefore, the accounting treatment is to apportion the costs of the business support costs or corporate costs across each of the areas. So that is what accounts for that increase there.

Mr CRIPPS: I refer to page 5-54 of the SDS in respect of the number of organisations assisted through the Multicultural Assistance Program. I note that the target in the 2009-10 budget papers was to assist 70 organisations but that 97 organisations actually received assistance through the MAP. Would the minister please advise whether, due to the extra 27 organisations that received funding under this program, there was a budget overrun for the MAP or whether each of the 90 organisations assisted had to accept a smaller slice of the pie from the MAP program to accommodate the higher than anticipated interest in the program?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for his question. The Queensland government's Multicultural Assistance Program allocates funding to important events and projects that strengthen the benefits of multiculturalism, foster harmonious community relations and participation and build community capacity including improved access to services. The grants program comprises an annual grants round which offers financial support to community services, local government agencies and ethnic community organisations to undertake events and projects that improve community awareness on cultural diversity and access to services.

Since 1989-90 the Queensland government has funded more than 1,400 projects under this annual grants round. In 2009-10 alone I approved funding of \$700,000 to 98 multicultural events and community development projects. So, as you can see, this is a very popular grants round. I know that the member for Hinchinbrook has some activities in his electorate. I remember that the member for Brisbane Central and I went to the Ingham Italian festival, which was very good.

CHAIR: It was a great festival.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not think it depends on the size of the grant at all, because some organisations ask for certain amounts and others ask for smaller amounts. What we are looking for is whether or not the organisation matches up with that criteria that I just mentioned to you. If they can demonstrate that they are matching up with that criteria then a recommendation will be made to me to approve that grant. For example, I recently met a Filipino organisation in Mackay. They just wanted a small grant of \$1,000 to celebrate one of their anniversaries. It was a small amount, but why should they miss out on that? They were very happy just to get that amount, and the rest of the money they were probably raising through fundraising activities. Sometimes people do not need the whole amount to fund their festival or their program; they just need a small amount of money. I am very proud of this project. A lot of grants have gone right throughout Queensland. I am very happy with the composition of the different activities that communities are doing. It is such a successful program and it will continue.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for questions by non-government members has expired. I call the member for Pine Rivers.

Ms MALE: Minister, on page 3-7 of the Service Delivery Statements it states that the government will develop a new multicultural policy. Could you explain to the committee why a new policy is necessary?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for her question. The Bligh government values the contribution of Queensland's multicultural communities. They have helped to make Queensland such a great place to live, work and raise a family. In October last year the government launched a public discussion paper *A multicultural future ... for all of us*. This landmark document invited the public to have its say on the future direction of multicultural policy in Queensland. Changing demographics, international trends and events, and national policy reforms have all impacted on Queensland since the current multicultural policy was introduced in 2004.

It is important that our new multicultural policy is updated to reflect these changing realities. We have a responsibility to develop a new policy which will ensure multiculturalism flourishes in the future. One of the issues we are consulting on is whether legislation is needed to demonstrate our commitment to multiculturalism. Queensland is home to more than 200 cultures, 220 languages and 100 religious

beliefs. In the 12 months to 30 September 2009, more than 50 per cent of our population growth came from net overseas migration. The Budget Strategy and Outlook reveals that our population is set to increase by about 300,000 over the next three years, or on average around 1,900 people a week. It forecasts that overseas migration is expected to remain the key driver of population growth.

Furthermore, the proportion of Queenslanders who were born overseas has been steadily increasing. The 2006 census showed that nearly 18 per cent of Queenslanders were born overseas, up from 17 per cent in 2001. Queensland is now home to growing communities from the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Fiji, Thailand, Korea, Hong Kong, Samoa, India, Indonesia and China. In addition to this, Queensland receives people through the Australian government's humanitarian program.

Since the release of the discussion paper, over 230 formal submissions have been received from the community. In total, more than 1,300 Queenslanders have taken part in the public consultation process. There have been 31 public forums, with around 860 people attending. As I said previously to the committee, this has been my priority and we have had to concentrate our resources on getting this right because this is fundamental. It is crucial that we end up having a very contemporary multicultural policy for all of Queensland that is reflective of all of these changes that are happening throughout Queensland.

We have also consulted with key cultural groups including the African, Somali, Pacific Islander, Tongan, Chinese, Muslim and Vietnamese communities. I was very pleased to attend some of these workshops for the multicultural discussion paper at Bowen Hills, Inala, Sunnybank, Cairns, Toowoomba, Townsville and Moorooka. Correction: the member for Brisbane Central went to the Bowen Hills one. As well, over 50 meetings were held with community groups, government agencies and departments, the multicultural sector and members of the public, and those meetings were attended by over 560 participants. I would like to thank Michael Hogan, Garry Page and the team at MAQ for doing such a thorough job on this very, very important discussion paper.

CHAIR: Minister, on page 3-11 of the SDS it states that the role of Multicultural Affairs is to promote positive community relations, which of course I deeply support. Can the minister advise the committee on what continuing action there is to support Indian students?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for her very important question in relation to Indian students. Queensland is home to a 26,000-strong Indian community that forms an important part of our state's cultural, social and economic life. We value the contribution Queensland's Indian community makes to our state, and we are committed to providing the local Indian community with all the supports it needs. Last year our state hosted an additional 20,000 international students from India. In 2009 the international education and training industry was worth more than \$2.6 billion to the Queensland economy. According to Queensland Education and Training International, in the 2009 calendar year the top source country of international student enrolments for Queensland was India, with over 20,000 students. This was followed by China, with around 17,000. It is encouraging that Queensland remains a key choice for students from India to pursue a world-class education.

Queensland has been on the front foot when it comes to supporting its Indian community. In January I attended a meeting called by Indian community leaders which was also attended by the Indian High Commissioner and Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson. At this meeting I was pleased to announce the appointment of Umesh Chandra as liaison officer between the Queensland government and Queensland's Indian community. Umesh Chandra is a well-respected figure in the local Indian community. He is President of the Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin, publisher of the *Brisbane Indian Times* and Vice President of the Federation of the Indian Communities of Queensland. He will play a key role in our engagement strategy with students, and the government accepted the recommendation of the Indian Honorary Consul of Queensland, Professor Singh, about Mr Chandra's appointment.

His appointment forms part of a whole-of-government effort to support local Indian students to ensure they feel safe and welcome in Queensland. On 15 April this year I again sat down with Indian community leaders and student representatives to discuss measures to maintain positive relations with Queensland's Indian community and international students. Also present were Michael Choi, the parliamentary secretary for natural resources, and senior representatives from the Queensland Police Service, Education and Training, Trade Queensland and the Department of Communities. The results of these round tables have been very positive and provide an important opportunity to discuss strategies to ensure that Indian students studying in Queensland are welcomed and treated with the respect they deserve.

In this role, Mr Chandra recently met with Indian students affected by the closure of Mackintosh College in June. He met with the students as soon as the closure occurred and helped to ensure they were made aware of the processes in place to support them to continue their studies. I would like to congratulate him on all of the work that he is doing.

To further support students, Multicultural Affairs coordinated information stalls during orientation week activities at the University of Queensland, QUT and Griffith University in February this year. I visited Griffith and QUT during orientation week and met with international students.

Mr RYAN: Minister, I refer you to page 3-22 of the SDS. As we have already heard from you, the multicultural services budget this year is just over \$9 million. Minister, can you outline what the full extent is of Queensland government spending on multicultural services?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for his question. It is a very important question because I think it puts in context, as I said earlier, that, even though MAQ is a small section of my department, there is a lot happening right across government in relation to multicultural affairs. All government agencies have responsibility to ensure that they are addressing the needs of Queensland's multicultural communities. Our across-government spend is about supporting diversity, and we are investing around \$62 million a year to strengthen multicultural services. It includes funding a broad range of programs and events to strengthen community relations and improve access to services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In addition to these targeted activities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds access the full range of general services and programs across government. Following the Premier's directive that all government departments provide access to interpreter services for clients, expenditure on interpreter and translation services in 2009-10 amounted to \$7.4 million. This is up from \$5.8 million in 2008-09. So you can see that our commitment is increasing over the years. Throughout 2009-10 the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation delivered a number of employment and training programs through the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative. That is a fantastic program. I know that all members would be familiar with how important that is.

These programs assisted more than 3,000 people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to become work ready. This assistance included the Community Employment and Infrastructure Program, with approximately \$9.8 million allocated to assist culturally and linguistically diverse participants.

Queensland Health has a five-year strategy to improve health in migrant communities, including an interpreter service which increased in usage by over 177 per cent in the first 18 months. Queensland Health provides funding to the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland for the multicultural community health worker program. The program includes five positions plus a coordinator to provide assistance to nine communities, including Sudanese, Vietnamese, Pacific Islanders, Filipino, Spanish speaking, Greek, Indian and Bosnian communities.

The Department of Education and Training is delivering a \$2.5 million program to support refugee school students. This program provides English classes and intensive settlement services at Milpera State High School to prepare newly arrived immigrant and refugee students for participation in secondary schools around the Brisbane area and, more recently, a new English as a second language centre in Woodridge.

In addition, TAFE Queensland on behalf of the Australian government provides English language classes for adult migrants and refugees through the Adult Migrant English Program. The Queensland Police Service has a multifaceted approach to policing our multicultural communities. This includes 152 police liaison positions which promote trust and understanding between culturally specific communities and the Queensland Police Service.

CHAIR: I now call the member for Murrumba.

Mr WELLS: Grazie, Senora Siedi, which is Italian for 'Thank you, Madam Chair'. I mention that not just because the minister has been talking about interpreter services but because I wanted to ask further about interpreter services. My pretext for this is SDS 3-11. Could you say a little bit more about the interpreter services, including the role your department plays in providing access to those services and the role your department plays in delivering training in respect of cultural diversity and linguistic competencies across government?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Dzień dobry, ni hau and xin chào. Queensland has a strong cultural identity and the state is home to many cultures and languages—and I thank you very much for your interest in our language services policy—and that is why we have developed a comprehensive policy. The aim of the policy is to ensure that the government is catering for the needs of Queenslanders from linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The policy requires Queensland government agencies to provide and meet the cost of professional interpreting services when they are provided by the Australian government's Translating and Interpreting Service or a private agency that is accredited by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters. This is a commitment we take very seriously, and it is one that I said previously is backed up by \$7.4 million in funding. It is about ensuring that Queenslanders with a first language other than English do not miss out on crucial government services.

The state government has also provided Deaf Services Queensland with \$614,000 for a two-year pilot to deliver Auslan and other interpreting and translation services. Today I am pleased to announce that an extra \$300,000 in one-off funds will be provided to Deaf Services Queensland under the Support with Interpreting, Translating and Communication, or SWITC program. The funds will assist Deaf Services Queensland to continue to deliver interpreting and translating services through this program

until June 2011. I visited Deaf Services Queensland at Moorooka and I have seen firsthand the great work that they are doing. In addition to helping deaf and hard of hearing Queenslanders, they are also doing a great job assisting people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Multicultural Affairs Queensland also provides staff with resources on how to work and engage with interpreters. These online resources which are available on its website include interpreting services for non-English speakers, telephone interpreting, translation services and of course the Queensland interpreter card. MAQ also provides the Queensland interpreter card and Queensland interpreter card kit which helps people with limited English proficiency access interpreters when using government services. The interpreter card kit includes a series of fact sheets, including how to obtain an interpreter, a procedural checklist for locating a professional interpreter, why you should work with a professional interpreter, how you work with an interpreter on the telephone et cetera.

The Bligh government is also committed to building culturally inclusive public services via the multicultural action plans. Under this initiative, Multicultural Affairs Queensland is working with government agencies to deliver cultural training and diversity management. I know that is an issue the member for Hinchinbrook raised last year in the estimates hearing. The plans require each department to report on the number of staff who have completed cultural competency training. In 2009-10, the Department of Communities provided multicultural and service delivery training involving 58 training sessions and over 850 staff across Queensland.

Ms MALE: Although I am a member who has represented landlocked electorates for my entire career, I have nonetheless always been a big supporter of Surf Life Saving Queensland and the work they do. I also noticed on page 3-11 of the SDS that your department provides funding to promote water and surf safety amongst culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Could you provide me with some more information on that?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much for your interest in this very, very important initiative. The initiative has been very well received, especially with our multicultural communities. We want to keep our beaches safe for all swimmers, no matter what their background. That is why in January I launched the On the Same Wave campaign with the tourism minister, Peter Lawlor, and Surf Life Saving Queensland's CEO, John Brennan. The Bligh government is providing \$100,000 for this new multicultural surf safety campaign which is being rolled out in schools and communities across the state. The campaign will target Queenslanders from culturally diverse and non-English speaking backgrounds. It will give them access to beach education classes from trained surf-lifesavers and ensure that schoolchildren get important surf safety information in their first language.

In May, I visited Milpera State High School in Brisbane where students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds received surf and water safety classes from a qualified surf-lifesaving instructor. They were very excited by it. One of their next trips, when the weather gets warmer, is to go to the beach and practise what they have been taught in these classes. They received lessons about the importance of swimming between the flags and how to identify warning signs. The students also experienced a simulation of being caught in a rip and discovered how much energy they would use trying to get free. Another very important thing is that they were also taught about sun safety and how to stay safe, especially around dams, creeks and streams.

As part of the campaign, we are distributing additional surf and water safety information to schools, community centres and refugee networks throughout Queensland. We are getting the surf and safety water message out there into our multicultural communities. I insisted that we have this information printed in different languages, and we have actually now printed them in 18 different languages, which is fantastic. We really are getting that message out there. The brochures will be in different languages as well. In May, Virgin Airlines became the first airline to include a new beach safety announcement on its domestic flights in Australia. I have recently travelled on Virgin and I have seen those ads and they are fantastic. We want to see Qantas come on board now as well.

Queensland has a rich multicultural identity and we want to see more people from diverse backgrounds join up and become lifesavers as well. That is the next part of our campaign. Hopefully, we will see some of those young students from Milpera down the track become fully fledged lifesavers and contribute to that iconic surf-lifesaving moment. It is an exciting campaign. It is one that we are continuing and it is one that is getting a lot of support out in the community. We want to get a very simple message out there to swim between the flags. We have to get that out to all of our different communities so that we can prevent any water incidents.

Mr WELLS: As I have mentioned to the minister before, perhaps to the point of tedium, I have a very significant Samoan population in my community. We have in Deception Bay the only Samoan meeting hut outside of Samoa, which was built by the Queensland government. That makes my electorate the expatriate capital of Samoa, I think. In that context, I would be grateful if the minister could give the committee a short report on her department's role in leading the response to the Pacific tsunami.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much because this is a very important issue. It is something that the government acted very quickly on when Samoa and Tonga felt the devastating effect of the tsunami in September last year. What we saw was the whole of Queensland coming together to support our Pacific neighbours. An estimated 16,000 Queenslanders have either Tongan or Samoan ancestry. I have a very large Samoan community in my electorate. I think the member for Beaudesert may also have some members around the Logan area, as does the member for Murrumba.

Basically, our community recovery response was quick. We got in there and we helped. We sent 22 personnel to Samoa from Queensland Health and Emergency Services as an initial response, including Queensland's urban search and rescue team. The Premier established the Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal with an initial contribution of \$500,000 from the Queensland government. We translated contact information into Samoan and made information available on radio stations and via government websites. We established a 13HEALTH hotline for counselling. A lot of people were traumatised by what had happened; they could not contact their family and relatives. We called all of the community leaders into Parliament House and had a meeting with them. We really worked very closely with them to make sure they got the support they needed.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for questions by government members has expired. I call the member for Hinchinbrook.

Mr CRIPPS: With reference to page 3-13 of the SDS and the total budget allocation for MAQ being \$9.3 million, as the minister knows language is the single most difficult barrier to social participation for people from non-English speaking backgrounds. English language tutoring is an extremely important service for migrants and refugees to Queensland. Will the minister please advise how much has been allocated for English language tutoring in multicultural communities for 2010-11 and why, when this service is essential to help Queenslanders from diverse cultural backgrounds become proficient in English, doesn't this program appear as a line item in the budget papers?

Ms PALASZCZUK: There is a very simple explanation, and I think we discussed this at some length at the last estimates. This is actually provided by the Department of Education and Training and also through the Commonwealth government, so you will not see it as a line item in my budget because MAQ does not actually provide these services. English as a second language is provided through adult English classes for migrants and refugees as part of the Australian government settlement services program. Under that program, Queensland TAFE colleges are contracted to deliver the Adult Migrant English Program. English as a second language classes in the state school system are the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Education and Training.

As a representative on the Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, I am aware that the Council of Australian Governments has determined that from 1 January 2009 English as a second language for new arrivals funding for schools would be incorporated into a new national education agreement, giving states and territories sole responsibility for determining the allocation of education for that purpose.

As I stated, you will not see it as a line item. We had this discussion last year. It is very important. I acknowledge that you have raised it in relation to my portfolio responsibilities in terms of MAQ in a broad section, but this is not the delivery responsibility of my particular agency. You will be better off directing that question to my colleague, the Minister for Education.

Mr CRIPPS: I refer to page 3-22 of the SDS which includes a new measure setting a target of 550,000 people to attend MAQ sponsored festivals and events in 2010-11. Participation by 550,000 Queenslanders across the state in MAQ sponsored festivals and events would certainly be an achievement. However, as I mentioned during the debate on the Appropriation Bill, this new SDS measure will record quantitative data in terms of participation. Qualitative data, such as the introduction of Queenslanders to a wider range of culturally diverse influences, may not be so easily collected. Will the minister advise what measures will be in place to ensure all regions of Queensland and a variety of festivals, events and cultures have representation in this measure?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for his question. We did have a brief discussion about this during I think the last session of parliament. It is a new measure. I think it is very important that, with our grants funding and with our Queensland Multicultural Festival that we hold at Roma Street Parklands in October, we get a sense of how many people are attending these festivals. In relation to the Queensland Multicultural Festival this year, I have asked my department to put in place some way of collecting that data, because you do not want to have an ad hoc, 'We think there are 100,000 or 20,000 people here.' We can see with the Paniyiri Greek Festival that it is growing and growing. It is getting bigger and bigger each year. We need to somehow collect the data. That might be a matter of talking to the relevant organisations to see how they can work that out. Some festivals I know charge a small fee, so it is going to be a lot easier for them to work out because they will know by the collection of the fees coming in how many people attended.

In relation to that particular performance measure, I might ask my director-general, Linda Apelt, to explain a little more about how she sees the department's ability to collect that measure. Bear in mind that it is a new measure for next year. It is not operating this year, but I think it is going to be very

important for the future to have this information so we can also assess, if a festival is getting bigger and bigger, whether it might need a bit more support. I attended the Gold Coast Multicultural Festival last year. Initially that started out as a small festival, but it is getting bigger and bigger. So it needs a bit more funding and more community support.

Ms Apelt: As the minister has mentioned, she has asked the department to ensure that all funded organisations provide evaluative feedback on the effectiveness of the funding and what has actually been achieved with the funding. Therefore, all future funding agreements with organisations for such events will require reports on a list of the activities and the outcomes that have been achieved from those activities. So qualitative information will come through those reports. We will also be looking for evidence of a level of community participation, the kinds of resources that have been produced, and any key factors in relation to achieving the objectives that have been part of the funding agreement. We will also be looking for some qualitative feedback from the participants in the various projects. We will be looking for evidence of future plans to sustain the positive project outcomes—

CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Apelt.

Mr CRIPPS: I refer to page 3-22 of the SDS, which shows that MAQ's target of 30 consultations with leaders groups and organisations representing people from diverse cultural backgrounds was tripled to the year ending 30 June 2010. I wonder whether the minister would advise why the target of 30 consultations was particularly low, especially when the state government knew that it would be developing a new multicultural policy that would require extensive consultation with representatives of those culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Doesn't the setting of unrealistic targets show that there is a lack of forward planning by MAQ?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, not at all. As I mentioned previously, we are developing a new multicultural policy for all of Queensland. When we are talking about the consultations which were held across Queensland, that is not just one consultation. That is about 50 or 60 people from different community organisations or representatives from different groups who are coming in to this one particular session. I think the data collection there is not truly reflective of how many people are actually involved. I also specifically asked as part of the consultation period that we have some specific consultations for groups—as I mentioned previously, the Vietnamese community and the Samoan community. That happened as well.

In terms of consultation, we are out there talking to people all the time. I do not think there is a week that goes by that Multicultural Affairs Queensland is not having many conversations with people from different community organisations. For example, as I mentioned before, when we had all the Samoan and Tongan groups in here at Parliament House, they were representative of all different church organisations right across South-East Queensland. All different peer groups were all coming together. In relation to this particular target, I might get the director-general to give some further clarification.

Ms Apelt: This particular service standard records the number of consultations, and that is with a whole range of groups throughout the community. It does not actually record the number of people. In terms of the variation, it is a very pleasing result because it exceeded our target.

Mr CRIPPS: No, I understand that perfectly. My question was the MAQ previously set the target at 30. You tripled that; you did 90. All I am saying in my question is that obviously the state government knew that it would be undertaking consultation right across the community for the development of a new multicultural policy. Why was the target level in the previous budget papers set at 30 when you eventually did triple that?

CHAIR: That is a second question. I will let Ms Apelt continue.

Ms Apelt: As the minister has indicated, there have been a number of significant initiatives that have occurred throughout the planning year for Multicultural Affairs Queensland. This service standard has been amended from the number of consultations and forums held with community groups, as the original performance measure was far too narrow. The performance measure as we now record it is a more accurate reflection of what was actually planned to take place.

CHAIR: The time allocated for questions from non-government members has expired. I have a question in relation to African communities. Minister, Queensland has a growing African community. Page 3-11 of the SDS highlights the range of grants and programs administered through MAQ. I am interested to know what programs and grants have been directed to assist our wonderful African community.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for her question. Queensland has a growing African population. It is now home to more than 36,000 residents who were born in Africa. Our African communities are drawn from around 50 countries. Many Queenslanders from African backgrounds face language barriers, and others need help to get jobs and gain recognition for the valuable skills that they bring to our state. We want to ensure that Queenslanders from African backgrounds are getting a fair go.

In March this year I met with one of the community development associations in Toowoomba. They are doing a great job supporting Toowoomba's African community, and we are continuing to help support them in the important work they are doing. We provided \$12,000 to them to help develop their walk to freedom speakers bureau.

We are also providing financial support to the Queensland African Communities Council via our Multicultural Assistance Program. We have contributed \$20,000 to help the council assist refugee communities in regional areas across the state. With these funds, the African council has been able to establish a community engagement project targeting Queenslanders from African backgrounds, helping them to access important services and supports. The new project will see this council provide information sessions and training programs to Queensland's African community specifically targeting those people living in Logan, Toowoomba and the Gold Coast.

Since becoming minister I have also attended several meetings with the state's Somali community. Last October in Brisbane I attended a meeting organised by the United Somali Association of Queensland. This meeting was well attended by the local Somali community representatives from the media and other community groups. At the meeting we discussed ways to support Queenslanders from this background and ensure that they can access government services.

We are also funding specific initiatives aimed at strengthening Queensland's African communities. This year we are going to be providing \$85,000 to employ two part-time community workers to support refugees including those from Africa. These community workers will work closely with the Queensland African Communities Council to represent Queenslanders from African backgrounds. We are also funding workers to support African refugee communities across Queensland via our CAMS and LAMP workers.

In 2009-10 we provided \$70,000 for one-off projects to support African refugee communities and help them to build links with the broader community. In September 2008 the government launched *New futures: the Queensland government's engagement with African refugees*. The New Futures identifies the key areas of need for African refugees in Queensland and outlines the joint response committed by agencies across the government. These areas include employment, education and training, housing, health, family support and community relations. Last but not least, the Queensland Police Service currently has four dedicated African police liaison officer positions.

Ms MALE: Minister, what component of the Home and Community Care Program funding is directed at assisting people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds? I reference this question to page 3-6 of the SDS.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for her question. The government is committed to supporting older Queenslanders and people with a disability. We want to ensure that they can live independently in their own home for as long as possible. Home and Community Care services are funded to support all eligible Queenslanders including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. As well as accessing general services, \$11.5 million has been invested in 20 organisations across Queensland that specifically address the needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who are eligible for services. These organisations focus on providing services to a diverse range of population groups throughout Queensland. These include services such as the Islamic Home and Community Care service, Ethnic Community Care Links Inc., the Greek Respite Centre, the Polish Social Welfare Service—it is very good to see the Polish Social Welfare Service there—Multicare Day Care Centre and the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland.

In addition, Home and Community Care's Multicultural Advisory Service provides information, education and training to service providers and clients. It also delivers care coordination services which focus on coordinating activities for clients who need help to gain access to more than one service. In 2009 the federal minister and I announced \$1.1 million in funding to establish seven new regional multicultural advisory services across Queensland. This funding included \$842,000 for Carers Queensland. These services are delivered across the state, benefiting Queenslanders in many of our regions. They will be delivered in Central Queensland, the Darling Downs, North Queensland, north and south Brisbane, Far North Queensland and west Moreton.

These regionally based services provide a range of multicultural information and education programs to enhance the delivery of Home and Community Care services. They give people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds more information about the services and how to access them. These new advisory services are in addition to the existing services. As you can see, there is a lot of work that is happening right across Queensland. I was very pleased to see that there is quite a large proportion of our Home and Community Care budget that is specifically targeted at enhancing the lives of people from our difference multicultural backgrounds.

Mr RYAN: Minister, I refer you to page 3-11 of the SDS, which refers to increased funding for the Ethnic Communities Council. Minister, how much is this funding and what is achieved through this investment?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much for the question. We are committed to creating a more inclusive Queensland. That is why we have increased our funding to the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland. We provide the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland \$158,000 a year in fixed term funding to support its role as the peak agency role in the multicultural sector. This funding includes an increase of \$50,000 from the previous financial year which will continue until next year.

The council has a long history in Queensland and a strong track record of strengthening multiculturalism across the state. It was established in 1976 and has been delivering important services to Queensland for well over two decades. Our support is helping the council in its role as an advocate and a representative for multicultural groups in Queensland. It is another sign of the Bligh government's commitment to strengthening Queensland's multicultural identity and embracing our cultural diversity. I want to pay tribute to the chair, Agnes, her board and staff for the great work the organisation is doing. I do not think there is a multicultural event in South-East Queensland at which you do not see either Agnes or Nick or Serge at.

They are always supporting the different communities, especially the new and emerging communities. They are at all the different events. I think Agnes is joining me on Saturday at the Roar against Racism match which is being held at Suncorp Stadium. It will be a great game between the Roar and Everton. It is a great opportunity for people to come along. I urge committee members to encourage as many people as possible from their local communities to come along. It will be a great day. Following on from the World Cup, I cannot think of a better event this weekend than for people to get out and enjoy the Roar against Racism spectacular of the Roar against Everton.

The Ethnic Communities Council also receives \$96,000 under the CAMS program. We are providing an additional \$20,000 a year to coordinate the twice-yearly planning meetings for the program. We are also providing the EEC with \$252,000 in funding over three years to conduct the Strengthening Ethnic Community Associations Project. This funding will allow the council to deliver training and workshops across the state. It will help ensure that Queenslanders from diverse backgrounds can acquire the skills they need to get jobs. It will also help them to gain access to training opportunities and government services. I regularly meet with the council. They are the peak organisation. They are doing an amazing job. I thank them for all the work that they do.

CHAIR: 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, Minister and officers, for your attendance. The committee has also 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 page of the Queensland parliament website within approximately two hours.

On behalf of the committee, whom I wish to thank most sincerely as we have operated in a very cooperative manner, I thank the Hansard officers, the time keepers and the parliamentary attendants for their assistance today. In particular I want to thank the research director, Amanda Honeyman, and the executive assistants, Carolyn Heffernan and Gail Easton, who have done a great job. We commented in our committee meetings on the professional and outstanding job they have done so far. I thank them sincerely. Minister, you may wish to thank others as well.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I thank you, Madam Chair, and the committee for the questions that you have asked in relation to the budget. To all the parliamentary staff, thank you very much for your help and assistance here today. I would like to especially thank my director-general, Linda Apelt, and all of her team, who have worked very hard in relation to this estimates hearing. Also to my personal staff goes a big thank you. Their work is appreciated.

Committee adjourned at 5.02 pm