

THURSDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2012

ESTIMATES—LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE— JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY-GENERAL


Estimates Committee Members

Mr RG Hopper (Chair)
Mr PW Wellington
Miss VM Barton
Mr WS Byrne
Mr SK Choat
Mr CJ Judge
Mr TJ Watts
Mr JR Woodforth

In Attendance

Hon. JP Bleijie, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
Mr D Fraser, Senior Policy Adviser
Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Mr T Ryan, Director-General (Acting)
Mr P Cook, Executive Director, Financial Services, Corporate Services
Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland
Mr K Cocks, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner
Crime and Misconduct Commission
Mr R Martin, Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer
Electoral Commission of Queensland
Mr W van der Merwe, Electoral Commissioner (Acting)
Legal Aid Queensland
Mr A Reilly, Chief Executive Officer
Office of the Ombudsman
Mr P Clarke, Queensland Ombudsman
Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland
Mr S Blackwood, Deputy Director-General (Acting)

Committee met at 9.28 am

 **CHAIR:** Good morning and welcome. I declare this estimates hearing of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee open. On behalf of the committee I welcome the Attorney-General, the advisers and members of the public to this hearing. I am Ray Hopper, the member for Condamine and I will be chairing this committee today. Mr Peter Wellington, MP, the member for Nicklin, is the deputy chair. We also welcome other members on to the committee: Anastacia Palaszczuk, Leader of the Opposition and member for Inala; Ms Verity Barton, member for Broadwater; Mr Bill Byrne, member for Rockhampton; Mr Sean Choat, member for Ipswich West; Mr Carl Judge, member for Yeerongpilly; Mr Trevor Watts, member for Toowoomba North; and Mr Jason Woodforth, member for Nudgee.

The committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2012 for the ministers and areas of responsibility allocated to it under schedule 6 of the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly. The committee will consider the relevant organisational units within the portfolios of Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, and Minister for Police and Community Safety. The committee will suspend proceedings for the following breaks: morning tea from 11.30 am to 11.45 am, lunch from 1.15 pm to 2.15 pm, afternoon tea from 3.45 pm to 4 pm and dinner from 6.30 pm to 7 pm. I remind all those participating in the hearing today that these proceedings are similar to parliament to the extent that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. In this regard I remind members of the public that, under the standing orders, the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee. I ask that all mobile phones or pagers be either switched off or switched to silent mode. I remind members that the standing orders provide that directors-general and those chief executive officers set out in schedule 7 of the standing orders may be questioned by the committee. For the benefit of Hansard I ask all advisers to identify themselves before answering a question.

The committee has also resolved that the following non-committee members be given leave to participate in the hearing throughout the day: Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk, MP, Leader of the Opposition and member for Inala; Mr David Gibson, MP, member for Gympie; Mrs Jo-Ann Miller, MP, member for Bundamba; and Ms Jackie Trad, MP, member for South Brisbane. The committee welcomes the attendance of the Leader of the Opposition for our first session. I now declare the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of Attorney-General and Minister for Justice open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Attorney, if you wish, you may make an opening statement.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank you and the committee members for the opportunity to be here at estimates today as we sit for the next five hours and review the expenditure of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. I acknowledge the statutory officers who are behind me and also the departmental officials who are here as well as my own staff. I think it is no secret that in March 2012 the Liberal National Newman government had a major task ahead of it not only across Premier and Cabinet, but in all departments. Justice and Attorney-General is not immune to that. We have had to make some tough decisions. In making those tough decisions, we have also had some positive impacts in terms of justice right across Queensland. In fact, some eight bills have already passed the parliament in the last six months. I do thank you for the opportunity and I will hand back to you for questions.

CHAIR: To start our questioning I will call on the Leader of the Opposition and member for Inala.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Attorney-General and staff. Can I please call Mr Ross Martin, chairperson of the Crime and Misconduct Commission? Welcome, Mr Martin. I refer to page 45 of the 2012-13 Queensland state budget Service Delivery Statements for the Queensland Police Service and to page 45 and 50 of the 2012-13 Queensland state budget Service Delivery Statements for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General which gives a sketchy outline of the role of the CMC. Mr Martin, could you please give the committee a brief description of the role and functions of the CMC?

Mr Martin: The CMC's role in detail is spelt out in our legislation, but a short version is this. We have a function to investigate misconduct, which is defined statutorily; we have a function to investigate serious and major crime, which is also defined statutorily and operationally; and we have some further functions involving intelligence, research, witness protection and so on. I can expand upon any individual one of those if you wish, but that is essentially—

Ms PALASZCZUK: They are very important functions. Mr Martin, I refer to the SDS on page 47, which outlines the number of serious matters retained for CMC investigation. It states Queensland Police Service matters that were explored during 2011-12 numbered about 30 and other agency matters numbered about 20. That seems to be quite a large workload.

Mr Martin: Sorry, I did not catch those numbers.

Ms PALASZCZUK: There were about 30 investigated—these were serious matters retained for CMC investigation—from the Queensland Police Service and another 20 from other agency matters. That seems to be quite a comprehensive workload for the CMC.

Mr Martin: The CMC receives thousands of complaints a year but we retain, according to a set of internal criteria which have been developed over time, a number of them. At any given moment there is something like between 50 and 70 internal investigations being done by the Misconduct section—and I think that is what you are referring to—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes.

Mr Martin:—at any given time. That is indeed a taxing workload.

Ms PALASZCZUK: With such a large workload—and I refer to page 46 of the SDS, which sets out the staffing for the CMC. I note there that the estimated staffing for 2012-13 is 350. Is your current staffing level 350?

Mr Martin: Staff counting is not an easy undertaking. There are full-time equivalents and there are part-time staff. There is a difference between what is on the establishment potentially and also the actual numbers. The figures that were provided in our annual report are accurate and I imagine they are the ones that have found their way into the document you are referring to.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is fine, thank you. Mr Martin, what effect on the organisation would there be if staffing was decreased by, say, between 10 and 20? You have said that there has been quite a large workload there; it has expanded here in the SDS for the CMC. If you had a reduction of 10 or 20 would that hamper any investigations? You said that there is quite a large number before the CMC at the moment.

Mr Martin: Perhaps I can answer that this way. Our annual budget was reduced in essentially a nominal way by less than one per cent. For reasons which I can expand upon, there will be a disproportionately large effect on our staffing. We will lose a significant number of staff.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sorry, you are going to lose significant numbers of staff?

Mr Martin: Yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: How many staff are you going to lose?

Mr Martin: As part of the EMP process—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sorry, the EMP process?

Mr Martin:—the EMP process that the government proposed, we had mirrored the general public service principles which were imposed.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Is that a 10 per cent cut, 15 per cent cut?

Mr Martin: I will have to give you some numbers, I am sorry, to be accurate if you bear with me. We have had something like 44 separations from the CMC as at 1 July 2012, which is made up of mostly temporary and casual staff. We will have something of the order of 30 positions disestablished. Not all of those positions are filled, but there will be nevertheless real losses of capacity as a result of losing 30 positions.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Would any of those 30 positions be senior investigative officers or officers of that calibre?

Mr Martin: At the moment our work in this area is in draft form and it has not yet been finally approved by the commission itself. Your question is a simple one. I am reluctant to descend into too much complexity—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Could I ask possibly if that could be taken on notice, if we could get the details of those?

Mr Martin: Before that I must say that my staff have not yet been fully briefed on all the details. So I am hesitant to reveal too much publicly until that happens. I expect to brief them about most of it tomorrow.

Ms PALASZCZUK: My question is to the acting director-general, Mr Ryan. The CMC chair has just talked about a workload of a number of investigations that are underway. Why is the staff of the CMC being cut?

Mr Ryan: Decisions about the CMC's budget are matters for the government. There have been some ongoing discussions between the CMC and the Attorney. I do not think that is a matter that I have any real control over—the budget allocation to the CMC.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is all right. I will ask the Attorney-General. Attorney-General, why are you cutting the CMC by up to 30 positions and 44 temporary, casual and contract positions when it has been examined here at the committee today that there are hundreds of investigations underway? Does your government not value the role that the CMC plays in undertaking these investigations?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. The government does value the work of the CMC. That is why they—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thirty full-time positions are going.

Mr BLEIJIE: The government does value the work of the CMC. That is why today I have announced an independent review of operations of the CMC, particularly to make sure that the CMC stops being used as a political football by politicians of all persuasions. I think that is in the best interests of Queensland, it is fair and it applies natural justice to people. This review will be chaired by former High Court judge Ian Callinan and respected UQ professor at law Nicholas Aroney. The CMC has funding of approximately \$50 million a year. Every Queenslanders would expect—

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you do not think that funding is adequate?

Mr BLEIJIE: Every Queenslanders—

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you are winding back the CMC?

Mr BLEIJIE: Every Queenslander should expect and would expect the government, when we are looking at fiscal accountability and responsibility, to look at all agencies. As I said in my opening paragraphs, no-one is immune to it. No agency in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General is immune to these necessary cuts. However, I do make the point that we have to make sure that we get the priority right. I have expressed some concern that on the day that another matter was cleared by the CMC the CMC announced a review into political donations into Queensland. I received correspondence from the chair with respect to staffing allocations and its budget. We are working through those at present. We are also working through those with the PCMC, which has also written to me about it. I understand that I am meeting with the chair of the PCMC next week to discuss these budget issues of the CMC.

We will get through this. The CMC, like every agency, will have to make some adjustments and also work out the priorities. I do not think it is in the interests of the top crime-fighting body in Queensland, the CMC, to be doing a review of political donations in Queensland using valuable resources when there has not been an issue with respect to that.

Ms PALASZCZUK: With all due respect, surely the CMC can work out what reviews they want to do. It does not have to be your opinion about whether or not they conduct those reviews.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question again. The CMC is completely independent and it makes its own assessment. I am making a judgement in saying that I think we have to make sure we get the priorities right. The government will also introduce unexplained wealth laws, which will be going to the CMC to track down the Mr Bigs of the world in organised crime, and I think there is more capacity there. These discussions with the CMC chair are ongoing and they are ongoing with the PCMC, as they should be.

Mr WATTS: If I might ask a question. Mr Martin, I am curious. What percentage of resources do you think the CMC has allocated to questions that were raised about people in relation to the politics in the lead-up to the last election?

Mr Martin: I am just not sure I understand the question. I would have thought in terms of percentage it was minimal. In the lead-up to the last election—I am confident I cannot put a number on it—there was a relatively modest specific process of assessment, one of which was very high profile. Given our general footprint, the resources dedicated to that were modest. It was not, I would not have thought, consuming the organisation or anything like that.

Mr CHOAT: Mr Martin, were any of the matters referred in the lead-up to the state election substantiated at all?

Mr Martin: I think we have to define some things here. If we are talking about the matters involving the present Premier then, no, none of them were. You asked a question about 'referred'. I do not want to descend into technicality. I think the short answer is that none of them was substantiated.

Mr JUDGE: Mr Martin, in relation to the CMC, is it the case that some investigations could be undertaken by the QPS, which is having a substantial increase in police numbers—for example, what the equivalent of Egret might be with the investigation of online offences, child abuse images online? There is a unit at the CMC, it is my understanding, that does that type of work. There is a section of the Queensland police that does the same kind of work. Is it the case that efficiencies could be achieved by aligning work in that way?

Mr Martin: We make sure that we are not duplicating the work done elsewhere, as best we possibly can. That is the reason for what you are referring to as our Operation Cerberus group operating differently from Task Force Argos, which is the police unit which operates in the same space. We do things differently from Argos. In particular, Argos tends to look for a different class of offender. We look for networked offenders who are high risk, and we have the advantage of being able to use our special powers in that space in a way that Task Force Argos does not and can not. So we are alive to that issue but we do different things.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Earlier I asked the Attorney-General about the 30 staff. I did ask if that could be provided on notice under standing order 183.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the opposition leader for the question. I think, as pointed out—

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is not a question; it is just to get clarification.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I think the CMC chair said that these matters are currently in discussions. I will attempt to get whatever we can by the end of the proceedings but—

Ms PALASZCZUK: If we can get the temporaries and casuals that have gone.

CHAIR: Order! The minister has been asked a question. Give him a chance to answer it.

Mr BLEIJIE: As I said, I will attempt to get whatever we can this afternoon, by the finalisation of the proceedings.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney-General, the role of the CMC in integrity matters in this state is paramount, following on from the Fitzgerald inquiry. At page 45 of the SDS it states that one of the roles of the CMC is to 'ensure a trustworthy public sector'. In an answer to a question on notice for the hearing later on this afternoon it has been stated that there are some 11 people who are going from the ethical standards unit in the police department, and now we are being told that there are some 30 positions going from the CMC. How can Queenslanders have faith that your government is committed to the roles and obligations of ensuring there is integrity across the Police Service and across the Public Service when your government is causing these massive cuts to the very areas that oversee public integrity in this state?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. With respect to the 11 ethical officers, I suggest that question be put to the Minister for Police because it is a police matter. I make the point: the review that I have announced today, headed by well-respected former High Court judge Ian Callinan, will get to the bottom of these issues.

If we are going to talk about integrity, accountability and ethics then let us be honest about it. For too long politicians, more so the Labor Party in recent years, have used the CMC as a political football. We want to stop that happening. I had three options (1) executive government could introduce legislation and get the changes through the House; (2) I could give it to the PCMC, which is made up of politicians; or (3) I could set an independent review and advisory panel headed by a former High Court judge. I have chosen the last option because it is taken out of politicians' hands. The review panel will come back to me before 15 March next year with recommendations. The terms of reference will be released later today.

I make the point that one of the essential elements of this review will be to ensure that when people make complaints to the CMC—if they then go concurrently and hold a press conference about a matter, that they have 'scored' an investigation by the CMC or that they have referred a matter to the CMC and try to political point score on it. That is what I think we need to stop in Queensland. For too long it has been happening and we will get to the bottom of it.

CHAIR: Attorney, are you able to provide a total of the amount of money restrained by the CMC in the last financial year?

Mr BLEIJIE: As well as its confiscation powers the CMC also has restraining provisions. The government certainly support the restraining provisions continuing. We have also announced the unexplained wealth provisions. We will get the figure with respect to the money restrained. I make the point that, on top of the just over \$20 million that was restrained for the 2011-12 period, I think there is a great opportunity for Queensland with our unexplained wealth laws, which will be introduced at the end of the year. The CMC exceeded its target by \$2 million—it had a target of \$18 million—and obtained 64 criminal proceeds restraining orders last financial year. That was below the target of 75 restraining orders due to the focus on finalising matters of 2011-12.

Miss BARTON: Attorney, I have a question about the target amount for the Crime and Misconduct Commission for the coming financial year. Do you have an estimate of the amount that the CMC might wish to restrain in the 2012-13 financial year?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. The target amount for 2012-13, for net value of criminal proceeds restrained, is \$18 million. The CMC has set the target for the number of criminal proceeds restraining orders obtained in the 2012-13 period at 75.

Mr JUDGE: Attorney, will the amendments to the proceeds of crime legislation increase the amount of money restrained and forfeited from offenders?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. Certainly the amendments to the proceeds of crime legislation that we are introducing, for the member's benefit, will increase the revenue. We are in early stages yet, member for Yeerongpilly, because we are in the process of doing that. Based on the consultation the CMC has had to date with my department—it is on a strictly in-confidence basis—it is expected that the proposed amendments to the proceeds of crime legislation will produce an increase in the money restrained and subsequently forfeited from offenders in Queensland. It is not easy today to quantify the amount of such increases because that depends on the sensitive nature of issues, the resourcing and the judicial decisions. The proposed serious drug offender scheme is expected to produce the greatest increase in revenues restrained and forfeited.

Mr WOODFORTH: Attorney, are you able to explain what the CMC's involvement was in the investigations of the prosecution of Mr Morehu-Barlow?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. I preface my answer by saying that that matter is currently before the courts; however, I think it is important, without talking about the prosecution, to say that the CMC did have a fairly fundamental involvement, in terms of their investigative ability, in getting to where we are today. I will not comment on the matters that are subject to the court—it would be highly inappropriate—however, I think I ought set out for the benefit of the committee the CMC's role in getting to where we are today.

On 8 December 2011 the CMC received a request from the Queensland Police Service for assistance regarding an alleged case of major fraud at Queensland Health. That man was arrested and brought before Queensland police on 13 December and was charged with fraud against Queensland Health and other offences, allegedly misappropriating some \$16.6 million. The CMC went about what it does best. An interagency task force was established to coordinate the investigation. They led a cooperative official misconduct investigation in conjunction with Queensland Health and QPS.

As part of this work a draft misconduct prevention report has been prepared identifying over 20 recommendations for procedural and systemic reform. These reforms will address the systemic issues and internal control failures that allowed the alleged conduct to continue. It is considered that there is significant public interest in the CMC exposing what occurred in Queensland Health in this regard.

Although the prosecution is before the court, I think we have learned valuable lessons from this particular issue. I think a lot of the reforms that we will now undertake will certainly go some way to ensuring this does not happen again.

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to Mr Ross Martin, the chairman of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. Mr Martin, earlier this morning there was a lot of discussion about the proceeds of crime legislation. The Leader of the Opposition has questioned you about staffing and possible staff reductions. I note that in your annual report you refer to some of the challenges. Page 10 refers to the challenges of 'attracting and retaining experienced staff to cope with the increasing workload relating to proceeds of crime'. Then at page 14 the report states—

The CMC's proceeds of crime team has struggled to attract and retain experienced staff to meet its current workload of matters and deal with an increasing number of new requests ...

Mr Martin, can you explain how your proceeds of crime unit operates? Do you just have three or four police officers? What sort of staffing and skill mix do those units need?

Mr Martin: The proceeds of crime team is headed by a professional. She is an accountant. There are a number of accountants working in it. It is a significant, substantial operation. I will have somebody behind me give me the exact numbers of people who work there; it is not two or three police officers. It has the support of police investigation where necessary. Something in the order of 16 staff members work in the proceeds section. What it does is look at those matters that we internally investigate in crime matters. It also takes referrals from Queensland police. So if the Queensland police generate a drug-trafficking investigation and they think there is opportunity to engage our present proceeds of crime laws then they will refer it to us. We have a very substantial workload as a result of all of this and there is a process of queuing that is undertaken to deal with these things. Is that sufficient?

Mr WELLINGTON: Actually, I was really trying to get to—in my mind, it seems to me that your units are specialist officers with specialist skills—

Mr Martin: Yes.

Mr WELLINGTON: And what I am gathering this morning is that if you have to cut staff because the dollars are simply not provided to you to fund these services, perhaps the accountant may have to be pulled out. So the question then is: who will pick up the work that the accountant was doing? I understand that these are specialist officers—accountants, lawyers, police officers and computer wizards. It just concerns me that if these units are not able to operate and generate the proceeds of crime that the government is assuming you can just access then the government's expectation of what your commission can deliver is unreasonable.

Mr Martin: The Attorney mentioned in passing, but it is a real point, that proceeds of crime is resource sensitive. The research that has been done indicates that the return on investment for proceeds of crime is something like 350 per cent—we have had this done independently by a university—and there is material in our annual report that indicates that for every \$1 million actually recovered—*forfeited*—we spend something like a quarter of a million dollars and for every \$1 million restrained we spend something like \$80,000. So it is very valuable, but it would be worth doing even if it cost because of the damage that it does to criminal organisations. However, it does require resources and those resources are hard to find. I think that is a point that is apparent to everybody.

Mr WELLINGTON: Earlier the Attorney-General spoke about the new investigation of the CMC, and I note in your annual report you spoke about the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee. In your report at page 67 you refer to the fact that the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee investigated the CMC's activities for over 12 months. I understand on 20 May 2011—last year—you referred to an investigation that was commenced that was then finalised and the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee tabled its report in May this year. Are you able to clarify who made submissions to the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee? Were there submissions from the opposition, the government, lawyers, barristers, social workers?

Mr Martin: The details of that are before my time as chair, but those collective groups of people that you mentioned were, as I understand it, among the sorts of people who had input into the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee's undertaking. We are overseen by a number of

organisations. The Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee is one of them. The Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Commissioner is another and the commission itself oversees the operation—that is to say there are part-time members who are not, strictly speaking, employees of the organisation in the same way that, for example, I am or the Assistant Commissioners, Crime and Misconduct are. So all of those things feed into our existing oversight.

Mr WELLINGTON: Have you had any response to the range of the 38 recommendations made in that Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee report that was tabled in parliament in May? Have you had any response from the committee or from the Attorney-General about any of those recommendations to date?

Mr Martin: From the committee, it has provided us with that report. From the Attorney-General, no.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you.

Miss BARTON: Attorney, I turn to Victim Assist Queensland and I refer to your answer to question on notice No. 7. Can you advise the committee if Victim Assist Queensland is meeting its target time frames when it comes to providing financial assistance to victims of crime please?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. I thank members of Victim Assist Queensland for not only providing a service but also how they go about protecting and helping vulnerable Queenslanders. We have to understand that when we are talking about victims in Queensland we are talking about not only some who have been directly the victim of crime but also their families. I also thank the many bodies in Queensland like the Queensland Homicide Victims Support Group and Bravehearts that work with Victim Assist to make sure that there is advice and financial assistance provided for them. Victim Assist has set challenging targets for the timely assessment of applications for financial assistance and continues to meet and indeed exceed these targets, as I am sure the member would be happy to note. The targets ensure that urgent applications are given priority and, if I can for the member's benefit, I will detail what the targets have been set at below.

There is an average of 21 days to assess urgent applications for interim and funeral assistance, an average of 90 days to assess applications from primary victims of an act of violence and witnesses of less serious acts of violence, and an average of 180 days to assess applications from related victims, witnesses of more serious acts of violence and parents who have been injured as a result of an act of violence against their child. These are more complex matters where the legislation sets a three-month waiting period to notify all of the potential victims of their right to make an application before an assessor may make a grant of assistance. In 2011-12 urgent interim applications were assessed in an average of 12 days, funeral applications assessed in an average of seven days and assessments for primary victims of an act of violence and witnesses of less serious acts of violence were completed in seven days on average. Some 2,001 applications for financial assistance were received in 2011-12. A total of \$11.59 million in payments were made for financial assistance in 2011-12. Victim Assist closely monitors the timeliness of these applications and I take a personal interest in these as well, particularly with the government's strong support for victims of crime in Queensland.

Mr JUDGE: Attorney, I refer you to the answer to question on notice No. 7. Will you expand on some of the services being provided to victims of crime by organisations that Victim Assist Queensland funds?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Yeerongpilly for the question. Victim Assist administers annual funding of over \$2.5 million to support victims of crime services. Six non-government organisations are funded annually under the program—Relationships Australia Queensland, the Queensland Homicide Victims Support Group, Anglicare Southern Queensland, Central Queensland Community Legal Centre, Women Working Alongside Women with Intellectual and Learning Disabilities and Protect All Children Today, which is better known as PACT. One-off funding of \$100,000 per annum is also provided to assist non-government organisations to build their capacity to provide better services for victims of crime. Also in 2011-12 there were one-off payments to Centacare, Bravehearts and Family Planning Queensland.

In 2012-13 one-off funding is being provided for the following initiatives. PACT, which is Protect All Children Today, received \$10,000 to develop a culturally appropriate court support program for victims of crime on Thursday Island and Bravehearts received \$90,000 to develop and deliver a training program across Queensland for practitioners. In conclusion, I say to the member that not only are we continuing to provide that money; the government is also providing an additional \$2 million over four years to victims of crime groups in Queensland. We have opened the applications and applications close on 19 October. The funding arrangements are due to be in place in early 2013. When I attended the Protect All Children Today AGM a couple of weeks ago in the Banco Court of the Queen Elizabeth II Courts of Law and we made the announcement that they could potentially put their hat in the ring for some of that pie of \$2 million over four years, they were all very excited.

CHAIR: I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: My question is to Mr Martin. Mr Martin, the Attorney-General said previously that he does not believe that the CMC should spend its time investigating political donations because it is not a good use of resources, or along those lines. Does the CMC chair see any historical role between political donations and institutionalised corruption? Is not one of the core roles of the CMC to prevent institutionalised corruption?

Mr Martin: We are proposing to undertake a review examining the practices both across the country and internationally to see what occupies that space with respect to the various rules and things and to see how Queensland's rules about donations and the separation of donors from political decision making can best be achieved. We are doing that as part of our research function, which is statutorily legislated for. Historically there have been, I am told before my time, issues that arose in the local government space and elsewhere in respect of these things. There was an investigation in a place other than Brisbane where these things arose. It is as part of that historical background that we look to conducting the review that is being discussed now.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you see that there is some merit in conducting that review?

Mr Martin: Yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would agree with that, Mr Martin. Going back, you talked about donors and political decision making, so this is just a follow-up question. Yesterday the Deputy Premier revealed that he has private meetings with a political donor. Do you think some safeguards should be put in place when a minister meets with a political donor?

Mr Martin: I cannot answer a question like that in the abstract. I would prefer to see what the rules are and what other examples of such a collection of rules might be. Before I can answer your question, I would prefer to have the benefit of what our research reveals so that we can understand what best practice should be.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Mr Martin. Attorney, in relation to the all-party Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee, of which you would be well aware of its functions and role in this parliament, as the member for Nicklin mentioned, there was a review that was conducted. There were some 38 recommendations. Recommendation No. 34, which in fact has not been followed by this government, actually recommends that the chair of the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee be appointed by the Leader of the Opposition, which was not followed under your government. Can you please explain to the committee the status of the recommendations of this thorough report which was taken over many months?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, it was a thorough report and I will deliver a thorough response in the time required under the legislation, which is not yet.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney-General, you announced today that you would be setting up a review. How much will Mr Callinan be paid to conduct the review? Will it be a per day fee or will it be per month or is there just an allocated cost?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for a great question. Mr Callinan, despite the esteem with which he is held in the community, has agreed to charge a per hour basis on the lowest level that a barrister would be paid by Crown law which I think—and I will be corrected—is about \$150 an hour plus GST. When I left the legal profession, I was charging \$300 an hour plus GST, so I think having a former High Court judge at \$150 an hour is a pretty good deal.

Ms PALASZCZUK: How much has been allocated for the total review?

Mr BLEIJIE: It is a per hour basis, so we will pay Mr Callinan for how many hours he works.

Mr WELLINGTON: Attorney-General, so you will be responding, as a result of this new investigation, to the parliament by 9 November this year?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. The government will have a response in the required time frame with respect to the 38 recommendations. That will be provided to the appropriate bodies by the statutory time frame that I am given. The second element of the review that I have announced will be happening in March next year. But the government is required to provide a response and I will table that response in the appropriate bodies at the appropriate time.

Mr WELLINGTON: Attorney-General, just for your information, I think the statutory date is 9 November this year. You are required to respond to the 38 recommendations which were contained in the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee report which was tabled in May this year. So the clock is ticking. If I can follow—

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the guidance of the—

Mr WELLINGTON: I am just being of assistance to you, Attorney-General, if you were not aware of the date.

Mr BLEIJIE: I appreciate the assistance and 9 November is a few weeks away, so we will have the document tabled in the required time frame.

Mr WELLINGTON: And we will certainly look forward to it with a great deal of interest. Mr Martin, the federal government and the state government are talking about how they are going to recover so much money from proceeds of crime confiscation. Can you explain how the proceeds are divvied up, if I can put it that simply, between the federal government and the state government claiming what they are going to recover? How do you come to some formula?

Mr Martin: I am not sure I properly understand the question you asked. At the moment proceeds of crime is substantially a state government matter. If you are referring to the prospect that there is some suggestion elsewhere that the federal government has an involvement in that, that is a discussion for people elsewhere. At the moment the state government substantially owns that space. The money that is recovered goes into consolidated revenue and it is used to do what governments use money to do.

Mr WELLINGTON: I suppose I am concerned about possible experienced staff retrenchments in the CMC because of the lack of funding. How many specialist accountants, solicitors and computer wizards have you had to say, 'Sorry, we can't continue your employment,' to as a result of the budget that has been brought down?

Mr Martin: Typically, the people who have gone—and I have to speak generally here, because I am not in a position to dissect the actual numbers at the moment for you—are able contributors but they have not been accountants, or solicitors, or police officers, or anything of that sort. We are aware that we have to maximise our resources. So we are doing our best not to lose those sorts of people. However, needs must. I cannot tell you now exactly the make-up of the people who are likely to be involved. I have to say that the 30 people who I am talking about are overlapped to some degree with the 40 people who I mentioned earlier. So I do not want you to think about them being added up necessarily. In many respects the people in that 30 are essentially vacant positions because people have already gone. Nevertheless, it may be that, for example, some—I will pause there because, as I say, I have not communicated this with my staff and I think it would be preferable for me to do that first unless you press me on the point.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you. I do not intend to press you. Mr Martin, in your annual report, which I find very informative reading, it concerns me that many Queenslanders do not really understand some of the real work that the CMC does in Queensland. Sometimes they think all you do is investigate politicians who have had an allegation against them. I read about how you have worked in partnership with the police and some of our covert phone-tapping activities, which has been critical in gathering crucial information. Can you use this opportunity to expand on some of those roles that a lot of Queenslanders just simply are not aware of?

Mr Martin: What we do in large measure is necessarily of its nature the sort of thing that we do not advertise. We conduct criminal investigations against the highest and most threatening levels of criminal target there are and we have the advantage of being able to do so in a way that the police do not, because the police typically deal with what I call volume crime. We have specialist multidisciplinary teams who focus on these high-order targets and they are the ones who are most resistant to investigation, they are the most savvy about how to deal with these things—the hard targets, so to speak—and we do as much of that as we possibly can with the resources that we have.

In addition, it has been mentioned as well—still speaking about crime—that we have our role in investigating organised paedophilia, Operation Cerberus. Further, still in crime, we have a function in assisting the police in our crime hearings so that, where the police come to an end, as it were, of their investigative capacities using ordinary resources we make ourselves available to use our special powers to assist them to take the investigation further. We do a great deal of that work and, of course, we also do the proceeds of crime. So those are the four things that our crime organisation does and does vigorously. But, of course, in respect of much of that, we have to fly under the radar insofar as the detail is concerned.

Mr WELLINGTON: I understand that one of the recommendations of that Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee report was for the retaining of your specialist investigation unit so that it just did not simply get handed over to the police to do the investigation. Can you comment on that specifically? Why do you believe it is important that that part of your commission not be handed over to the Police Service?

Mr Martin: Are you talking about the capacity to conduct hearings that involve our special powers?

Mr WELLINGTON: Yes.

Mr Martin: There are risks to the community if a body that has those powers exercises them in a way that is unfettered or that violates commonly accepted standards of civil liberties. For that reason we have multidisciplinary teams so that there is a group of cultures that are involved in that—lawyers, accountants, police. It is not just dominated by one world view and we have independent oversight of that. For things to get before the possibility of our powers to be engaged, there are independent members of the community who look at these things and so forth. That is part of our crime function. Our crime function is bedded in a wider CMC, which has an integrity culture. So there is much value in the

community sense of not being intimidated by our powers and assured that they are being used wisely and appropriately, given that the community cannot look, for obvious reasons, at precisely what is going on at any given time. It is an assurance that these things should be dealt with, I think, by a separate body from the police.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you. While we are talking about the proceeds of crime. How much money have we recovered from Mr Barlow?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. As I premised my argument before, I will refrain from talking about any matters that may be sub judice or before the courts. The proceeds of crime has been of particular media interest and I congratulate the CMC in relation to its role in this job. The proceeds of crime team at the CMC has restrained assets valued at approximately \$12 million from Mr Barlow. All restrained property is in the possession of the Public Trustee and, to date, the state has not forfeited any property from Mr Barlow and the confiscation proceeds remain ongoing.

Mr WOODFORTH: I move to the Electoral Commission. Voting is an important function of a democratic society. It appears that the difficulty at present is that some people with a disability, such as vision impairment, struggle to vote. What is the ECQ doing to assist vision impaired voters?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. It is an important question with respect to those with particular impairments—and in this case you have asked about vision impairments—and how they can fully participate in the democratic right to participate in elections. The main mission of the ECQ is to ensure that the democratic right to vote of all eligible electors is fulfilled. For the member's benefit, there are a number of low-level initiatives that have been put in place by the ECQ in recent years to assist electors with certain disabilities.

The vision impaired project was temporarily put on hold in 2011-12 as a result of the commission's commitment to running state and local government elections. I do not think it is any secret that the state and local government elections were in close proximity to each other. There was the date change for the local government elections because of the flood commission report that was delayed. I anticipate that the commission will again start to reignite that debate and look at those initiatives to make sure that we can get those people who have particular impairments to be able to exercise their vote in the best way possible.

Miss BARTON: Mr Attorney-General, the government recently announced the abolition of administrative funding for political parties. I wonder if you could enlighten us as to how much money this will save the government in the coming financial year?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Broadwater for the question. The government has taken a decision to stop administrative funding to political parties. I was shadow Attorney-General at the time when the electoral accountability legislation was introduced by the former Labor government. It was an abhorrent piece of legislation that was designed, in the dying days of a government, to prop up its financial capacity to win elections and, then following the election, to prop up the administration in Peel Street. This meant that the taxpayer was paying for coffee machines, staffing, floor coverings, paint, entertainment expenses—particularly for the Labor Party that designed the legislation, but I acknowledge it also had a benefit to other political parties and Independents, because they also received administrative funding. So you had a situation where public funding was increased but at the same time political parties received administrative funding.

What was abhorrent about this was that the taxpayer was forking out \$2 million a year for the Labor Party, \$2 million a year for the Liberal National Party. You would think that an argument could be raised that, as the government has won the election, it would benefit us by having the administrative funding available, because the Labor Party, with their reduction in members, means that they get about \$240,000 a year administrative funding whereas the Liberal National Party will still receive \$1 million. We have cut it. We have completely cut it. So for the next four years, that is a direct hit to political parties, because the taxpayer should never have had to fork out administrative funding to make sure that the Labor Party or the LNP could walk in and turn on the coffee machine or the espresso machine on in the morning. So I think that the government has made the right decision.

In terms of the savings, it is quite easy to work out when a political party is receiving up to \$2 million a year. The frightening part of this legislation was not that it was just wrong—and we, of course, opposed it at the time—but the political parties waltzed down to the ECQ every six months and they got a cheque for \$1 million and then that administrative money was not subject to any level of accountability. The political parties spent the \$2 million a year on what they wanted to spend it on. We think that politics is above that. That is why in the first six months of this government we abolished the administrative funding to political parties, saving for the 2013-14 period up to \$3 million—about \$2.8 million—in the 2013-14 period.

I think this is a great win for Queensland. It has allowed us the capacity to do other things in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. It also restores some element of accountability into political parties—that the taxpayer should not be funding the administration of political parties. If I can add in conclusion, I will be releasing a green paper on accountability and electoral reform in Queensland

by the end of this year. We will for once and for all stop this nonsense about political donations, capping electoral money that you can spend, working out having to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars working out whether the frame of the corflute is an electoral expense. It was messy at the time and I warned the former Attorney-General and the government that it would create all sorts of nuisances and obscurities and probably all sorts of people have been in breach of the relevant provisions of the new amendments. We will change it. We will put out a green paper and we will have a discussion with Queensland that they certainly did not have. If you recall, Mr Chair, when the Labor Party introduced that legislation I believe it was in the middle of the week when Gordon Nuttall appeared in the Legislative Assembly next door. What a great way to hide an unaccountability act—it was called the electoral reform act or whatever it was. It was done in a rushed and hasty way under the guise of Gordon Nuttall appearing. So we will right that wrong in a relatively short period of time.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr CHOAT: My question is for the Attorney-General. I am sure you are aware that, particularly coming from my electorate, I have very keen interest in youth justice and I would like to take the hearing in that direction. I refer to your answer to question on notice No. 9. Could you outline how the government would fulfil its commitment contained in the six-month action plan to engage service providers to run boot camps and have them up and running by January of next year?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Ipswich West for the question. I am excited about this policy, because we have an innovative way to get young kids out of our detention centres. For too long Queensland youth justice has not been a priority of governments. We have immediately moved youth justice from the department of communities to my department. We have put in Steve Armitage from education into run this section of youth justice as well as about 1,000 transferred employees from communities to Justice and Attorney-General.

We have an exciting opportunity here. We are doing a trial of boot camps in two areas in Queensland—one in Cairns and one, of course, at the Gold Coast. One thing about youth justice—and the scariest statistic—is that about 32 per cent of young people in our detention centres have been there five times or more. Unfortunately, a lot of the times it is because they prefer to be in detention because they are getting three meals a day or they are not being abused by their folks, or their carers, or their communities. There are various reasons the statistic is so high.

We are wanting to change that. We are wanting to redefine youth justice in Queensland. That is why we are taking the community with us. I think we have had strong support for our tender process for our boot camps. We will establish a boot camp at the Gold Coast, which is going to be an early intervention boot camp. So, as teachers, principals or police officers believe that a young child is going off the rail they will be able to refer them to this early intervention boot camp. The Cairns boot camp will be a little bit more hard line for kids facing detention and we are currently working through the legislation with the magistrates and the other relevant stakeholders to make sure that young people have an opportunity—this is not a draconian law because this is voluntary for the child—to work with the court and the magistrate to change their life. That is what we are trying to do here: we are trying to change the lives of young people to get them out of this culture of crime. One thing we know about youth justice is if we do not get them sorted out and get their lives back on track they will end up in our adult detention centres after they have been to our youth detention centres.

I am excited about the boot camp opportunity. It is a trial for two years. We are investing a couple of million dollars in it. I want the trials to be a resounding success—and so do a lot of other members of parliament because everyone is asking me for one of these boot camps in their electorate. As I travel the state going to community legal centres, and I was at the South West Community Legal Centre in the member for Inala's electorate only a couple of weeks ago, I positively talk to these groups, these community legal centres, about the boot camps and how we are redefining youth justice in Queensland.

Mr WATTS: Attorney, just staying on the topic of youth detention and the programs, could you give us a little bit of detail about what safeguards will be in place to ensure that the Queensland youth detention centres are entirely appropriate and cost effective?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, through you to the member, I thank you. We are going through a very rigid tender process. We have held information sessions at both Cairns and the Gold Coast. We are making sure that these are tight and rock solid in terms of the commitment they have got to young people. As part of that process I have travelled to Cairns on a number of occasions, I did a day trip starting at the youth justice centre in Mermaid Beach and I travelled out to Beaudesert. I looked at government facilities out there like The Outlook. I have to be cautious not to pre-empt any discussion in relation to the tender process, but can I just pay particular tribute—and it does not impact on the procurement process—to Keith Payne, who is an elderly gentleman who received a Victoria Cross. He is a patron of one of the groups that operate at the Gold Coast. He took me out to the camp. He has not lost any energy even at his age. He is committed to making sure that we keep young people out of our detention centres and getting their lives back on track, involving the families and support groups and also mentoring, making sure young kids are mentored after they come out of these camps to make sure that they do not go back to detention centres or prisons at later times. I pay tribute to Keith Payne. He is an

Australian legend—all the Victoria Cross winners are. He did attempt to get me to go on the 500 metre flying fox. I have two phobias in life, one of sharks and one of heights, so we sent the local police officer up in our place.

CHAIR: I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much, Chair. Attorney, do you agree with the statement that the CMC is an independent specialist agency?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chair. Yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Given that you agree that it is an independent specialist agency and given that the chair of the CMC has said that there is—and I quote—merit in conducting a review of political donations, will you assure Queenslanders today that that review will go ahead?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chair. If the honourable member is suggesting that I in some way have some overriding responsibility to tell the CMC not to do the review then she is mistaken. I do not and I cannot. As governments we try to get our priorities right. I am simply saying that I do not think it a priority for the CMC, on the back of an investigation that cleared everyone, and again I make the point it was a—

Ms PALASZCZUK: You are saying you do not think it is a priority. Will you guarantee Queenslanders that that review can go ahead if the independent agency wants that review to go ahead.? Yes or no?.

Mr BLEIJIE: I think the CMC chair has made it pretty clear that the review is going ahead and I will not interfere in any way in that respect. Can I just make the point that this was the final matter I think the former Labor government referred to the CMC. Again everyone was cleared, no case to answer, and I just make the point on the back of that that an investigation was launched. I have to have a look at this because my department funds the CMC to the tune of \$50 million a year. It would be irresponsible for me not to look at the budget in all its context and when we are spending \$50 million of taxpayers money. I simply make the point that I do not think it is a priority for political donations to be reviewed in Queensland, particularly on the back of the clearing and, as I say, no case to answer. I do not think it is a justifiable excuse.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you want to interfere with the independence?

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, the minister has the right to answer the question. Thank you.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chair. At the same time that I am having discussions with the CMC about funding and how it is going to contribute to the efficiency targets set by the government, I just say perhaps some resources could be reprioritised.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney-General, if the CMC is an independent specialist agency, why are they not immune from your job cuts? Why will you not let them carry out their role and their function independent of government?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you to the member for the question. It has something to do with a \$65 billion debt left as the Labor Party legacy. That is why no agency, no department, is immune to efficiency measures.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Will you guarantee that in no shape or form the CMC's roles and functions will be diminished by the cuts?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. The CMC will continue to perform its roles and functions and I look forward to the recommendations from the review that I have announced today.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney-General, did you make a submission to the all-party Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. We have members of our Liberal National Party on that committee. I fully trust their judgment to make their own submissions.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Did you personally make a submission? You are raising concerns about the CMC today. Did you make a submission to this report that was tabled in the parliament by the all-party parliamentary CMC committee?

Mr BLEIJIE: This is a committee with all parliamentarians of all political sides on it. I respond to the report. I do not put my view forward, I respond to the report. That is what I am doing before 9 November.

Mr WELLINGTON: If I can put a follow-on question to Mr Martin, the CMC chairman, in relation to all this talk about budget restraints. I note in your annual report, which I am keen for you to speak about, at page 42 you talk about the achievements on witness protection. You lead off by saying, 'All witnesses in our program were kept safe and were able to give their evidence within court.' Then you refer to page 43. With the tightening of the belt, what assurances can you provide to Queenslanders that any people who come forward and are involved in witness protection because of the critical evidence that they give will continue to be protected to the highest level, irrespective that the government talks about only front-line services are going to be protected?

Mr Martin: Witness protection is critical. We are unique in Australia in the sense that we inherited the witness protection process as an issue arising out of the Fitzgerald Inquiry. Other states have it as part of the Police Service and in other states there have been regrettable incidents. We have had none. With budget austerity, ways to do things better have to be found and we are working on those things so that we can, for example, cross skill various people so that highs and lows and what have you can be worked through. I do not want to spell out the details, but I am confident that the witness protection process will be competently, professionally and efficiently maintained.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you. There certainly has been evidence in relation to other jurisdictions where witness protection certainly was compromised I understand by the police service. I am keen to take my next question to the Electoral Commissioner, Mr Kerslake. It follows on from the issues that the Attorney-General has been raising about political donations. I understand due to the last state election there were various people who were referred to the Queensland Electoral Commission for investigation because of allegations of non-compliance with the Electoral Act in relation to the completion of notifications of their involvement in the preparation of material promoting a specific candidate or advocating a vote against a candidate. Can you please comment on the state of the investigations into the people who were referred to your commission for investigation? Has there been success and what prosecution is happening as a result of that success?

Mr van der Merwe: For the record, my name is Walter van der Merwe. I am the Acting Commissioner. Mr Kerslake is not here this morning. Thank you for the question. The allegations that you raised were certainly raised with the commission. We worked closely with the Crime and Misconduct Commission through a referral basis and we are quite happy with the outcome in terms of the allegations. We have finalised that. There were no prosecutions.

CHAIR: I call the member for Yeerongpilly?

Mr JUDGE: Attorney, I will ask an overarching question and then four sub questions. It is about funding provided in the budget for non-government agencies providing services to young offenders and then I will take you to specialist counselling services, youth offender services, participation of Indigenous elders in youth justice conferences and a youth opportunity program in Cairns. The original question is what funding has been provided in the budget for non-government agencies providing services for young offenders?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. In 2011-12 a total of \$5.27 million was invested in non-government organisations to provide services to young offenders and their families. \$1.22 million was invested in two specialist counselling services—Griffith Youth Forensic Service and the Mater Family and Youth Counselling Service—to provide therapeutic intervention to 47 young people who have sexually offended. The Griffith Youth Forensic Service provides specialist assessment and treatment services for young people on supervised court orders for sexual offences. The Mater Family and Youth Counselling Service provides therapeutic intervention for young people who have sexually offended, their families and their victims and their families following referral to youth justice.

Mr JUDGE: How much money has been provided to specialist counselling services to assist with the rehabilitation of young people who have sexually offended?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. The \$2.46 million was invested in the six young offender support services across the state which aimed at addressing the reasons associated with offending and reducing the likelihood of a person reoffending. That is a particularly pertinent point because what we attempt to do with these services, particularly in the non-government sector, is to stop these young people reoffending. I think Queenslanders are fair people. They understand and appreciate that young people occasionally make mistakes. What we have to make sure of is that support mechanisms are available to try to stop them reoffending. If we do not stop them reoffending and provide assistance to those services then it ends up costing the state a lot more money down the track because they end up in our adult detention centres.

Mr JUDGE: How much funding has been provided to young offender services working with youth detention centres to reduce the risks associated with offending and reoffending?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. This is an important question. There is a substantial amount of money to our non-government sector in relation to youth detention centres. The Goodna Ipswich Youth and Community Action Association Incorporated was funded \$2 million to deliver services to young people and their families involved in the youth justice system in the Ipswich and Goodna areas. Inala Youth Care Community Incorporated was funded \$38 million to deliver culturally appropriate support services to Pacific Islander young people and their families involved in the youth justice system in the Logan and Inala areas.

The North West Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Association Incorporated was funded \$0.34 million to provide culturally appropriate support services involved in the youth justice system in the north Brisbane area. Milby Incorporated was funded \$0.2 million to provide culturally appropriate support services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families involved in the youth justice system in the member for Rockhampton's area. He will be pleased. ACT for

Kids was funded \$1.37 million to provide culturally appropriate support services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families involved in the youth justice system in Far North Queensland as part of the Youth Opportunity Program. Finally, Murri Watch Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation was funded \$0.07 million to provide culturally appropriate support services to young people and their families in the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre.

Mr JUDGE: How much funding has been provided to support the participation of Indigenous elders in the youth justice conference process?

Mr BLEIJIE: I understand a total of \$600,000 was funded. It was expended to support the participation of the Indigenous elders in the youth justice conference process.

Mr JUDGE: Finally, how much funding has been provided to the Youth Opportunity Program in Cairns?

Mr BLEIJIE: ACT for Kids in Cairns was provided \$1.65 million of grant funding to deliver the Youth Opportunity Program, or what we call YOP. YOP consists of young offender support services and a bail support service. Evaluation of this program has found that participation with the young offender support service is associated with lower risk of reoffending, which is what we are about. YOP is one of the six services funded across the state as part of the young offender support service initiative. They are also one of the five services funded across the state as part of the Bail Support Service initiative. \$1.24 million was invested in this initiative, which provides the police and courts with a viable alternative to remain in custody. The five funded bail support services assisted a combined total of 185 young people.

CHAIR: I call the member for Nicklin.

Mr WELLINGTON: Attorney-General, today, on the very day of the estimates hearing, the very day that we have the chance to question our CMC chairman and other parties, you have announced this new investigation into the Crime and Misconduct Commission. Will you give a commitment that that report, in full, will be released and tabled in parliament for all Queenslanders to see?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes.

Mr WELLINGTON: When? After you have received it? Within what sort of time frame?

Mr BLEIJIE: I suspect I will receive it on 15 March and I am happy to—

Mr WELLINGTON: Within a reasonable time?

Mr BLEIJIE: Within a reasonable time I am happy to release it. One thing about this government is that we believe in openness and transparency. Two days ago the Premier announced the open government initiative. In fact, if the assistant minister, Ray Stevens, has all that up and running by then, I suspect the report will be available on the new open government website.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney-General, unemployment rates have just been released. The Queensland trend unemployment rate is 6.1 per cent, up from 5.9 per cent in August. In fact, these are the worst trend unemployment rates since December 2003. Attorney-General, do you acknowledge that your massive job cuts across government are making a huge impact and are contributing to these high unemployment rates?

Mr BLEIJIE: No, I do not. What this government is about is job creation. We have done many things and announced many initiatives that will get the private sector up and running in Queensland. We have four pillars of the Queensland economy: tourism, construction, resources and agriculture. When those cogs are turning in this state, there will be plenty of job opportunities in the private sector.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am sorry, Attorney-General: how many job cuts have there been from your entire department, including the ones that we have just heard about from the CMC?

Mr BLEIJIE: This is made up of a few statistics, because we obviously had the VSP scheme, which was under the former government. We had 535 staff express an interest in that scheme. For the latest amount, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, with the VSPs, the established management program, the agency savings initiatives, totalled 638.

Ms PALASZCZUK: In total, 638; thank you. Attorney-General, I refer to page 1 of the 2012-13 Queensland state budget SDS. Are you happy with all aspects of the budget for your department?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney-General, I refer you to an article in the *Australian* on 2 October 2012, entitled 'Jury out on \$1.1m funding for Queensland magistrates courts'. That article refers to a letter that you wrote to the Treasurer requesting an additional \$1.1 million in funding for magistrates. Did you write that letter to the Treasurer?

Mr BLEIJIE: Considering the letter appeared in the paper with my signature, yes. What the member asks me about is the acting magistrate arrangements. It is important to understand that in our supreme and district courts, we have a sufficient amount of judges. I was pleased to go to the commission yesterday where the swearing in of Justice Jackson was proceeded with. He will be a great addition to the Supreme Court. That is an additional judge on the Supreme Court.

However, magistrates are different. We do not have enough magistrates. I think if we were to have the level of magistrates that are required across the state, we would be appointing 30 to 50 additional magistrates. What we have is an acting arrangement. The former government changed the acting arrangements to a system where they were appointed for up to 15 years to 12 months. It is a complete mess, because the Attorney-General of the day has applications every week about reappointments of magistrates and the consultation you have to go through. The 12-month period is not long enough and I am reviewing that process at the moment.

Also, I am working with the chief magistrate to work this out. I would like a system where the acting magistrate arrangements are, in fact, all retired magistrates who have come back to service. They do not all work 100 per cent of hours; some work 10 or 20 per cent. We have created three additional permanent magistrate positions in Queensland, one of which, in one hour's time, hopefully, will be endorsed by Her Excellency the Governor. That magistrate will be appointed to Southport. We have, in fact, added three permanent magistrates to what the former government had.

Mr CHOAT: Mr Chairman, could I ask a follow-up question?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr CHOAT: In the answer to the previous question asked by the Leader of the Opposition, and I maybe wrong but I heard that well over 500 people put their hand up and said, 'We would like to voluntarily leave the organisation'. There is a total of 600 positions. The total 630—or whatever you quoted—would take into account some vacant positions that do not have staff associated with them, so supernumeraries would be included in that as well. What we were saying is that well over 500 of the possible 600 want to go; is that correct?

Mr BLEIJIE: Can I say to the member that when we look at the complete figures, the VSPs were 159, the established management program was 177, agency savings initiatives were 302 and that is where you get the 638. We also have the 510 full-time redundancies which is mixed in with that. The rounded up figure is 638. An estimated reduction of 507 FT funded positions is required to meet the full year effect of the savings. The 507 is comprised of 80 funded vacancies and 420 FTEVR offers. The net reduction of 325 is based on approximately 75 per cent VR acceptances.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney-General, did the 638 include the 30 that are going from the CMC?

Mr BLEIJIE: As I said, the CMC have a target and we are working with the CMC and the PCMC to work through those issues at the moment.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sure, but does that 638 include the 30 or is it in addition, so it will then be 668?

Mr BLEIJIE: The 638 does not include the CMC.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, so 668. Attorney-General, just going back to what I was asking you before we got sidetracked, you were talking about three new magistrates that are going to be appointed, one at Southport. Where are the other two?

Mr BLEIJIE: We are working with the Chief Magistrate. I am guided by his advice on that. One of the issues we have with magistrates is that under legislative changes it is very hard for the chief magistrate—you will recall the Di Fingleton issues with putting magistrates around the state. Legislation was changed. It is very hard, once a magistrate is appointed, to force them to go somewhere. It is not like teachers where they have to do rural service. However, what I have said to the Chief Magistrate is that we will do it differently. On the executive council I will actually appoint or recommend the Governor appoint magistrates for a period in one place—

Ms PALASZCZUK: To a particular region. The former government followed that practice as well.

Mr BLEIJIE: We would not have the difficulties we are having now if it worked completely—

Ms PALASZCZUK: You will find that that did actually happen before.

Mr BLEIJIE: Can I just say that we are having an extreme amount of difficulty trying to fill some vacancies. On top of the three permanent placements, we also have replacements of an additional four magistrates, in effect, I think by the end of the year. We are working with the Chief Magistrate at the moment to fill all those vacancies and making sure that all of Queensland is serviced appropriately.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney-General, do you need that extra \$1.1 million or will that be subject to further CBRC discussions?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, that is subject to further CBRC discussions. However, I will say this: the acting arrangements are sufficiently able so that justice will be administered across Queensland in our Magistrates Court, particularly with the three new permanent magistrates. Southport in particular has had some issues. A permanent magistrate there is overdue and I am glad we made that appointment, which I am hoping to be able to announce some time this afternoon.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I refer to page 24 of the SDS. When did you make the decision to outsource court recording and transcription services?

Mr BLEIJIE: I cannot recall the exact date, but it is something that, when governments look at savings and efficiencies across-the-board, we have looked at it for some time. In fact, when I was shadow Attorney-General and was preparing budgets for the election campaign, we were certainly looking at ways that we could potentially save money in the future. The outsourcing of the court reporting services, the SRB, will have a very positive gain for the state's finances. In terms of savings it will be about \$6 million, but I could not give the exact date when it was decided. That was all CBRC and cabinet discussion.

Ms PALASZCZUK: What consultation was undertaken with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Queensland, the Queensland Bar Association and the Queensland Law Society before the decision was made to outsource court recording and transcription services and what, if any, advice did you receive from those stakeholders?

Mr BLEIJIE: I discussed on a couple of occasions, particularly with the Chief Justice and the Chief Judge, in fact, if government was swayed to proceed down the path of outsourcing the State Reporting Bureau to other services through the proper procurement services. They expressed that if we did proceed down that path, we would have to ensure that we listened to them in term of the courts' ability to function and we certainly will take all that on board. That is why we are not rushing the process. It is not starting until the first quarter of next year. In fact, this is nothing new.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So discussions did happen before you made the decision?

Mr BLEIJIE: Discussions happen. I think you would be challenged to find letters back and forth, but I did talk to Dr John de Groot and the President of the Bar Association, the Chief Judge and the Chief Justice. They were, in effect, casual conversations. We might have discussed a range of issues at the time, because I try to meet every couple of weeks with all of the heads of the jurisdictions, but we probably see each other every week in any event.

As I said, there is nothing new with outsourcing. The Commonwealth government have all their court reporting outsourced. Every Commonwealth court, including the Commonwealth courts in Queensland, are outsourced. The Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, which the member will be interested in because the member sat in cabinet when they established QCAT, funnily enough outsources its transcription services. Also, the Carmody commission of inquiry, which is on at the moment, outsources its transcription services.

Ms PALASZCZUK: What is the proposed time frame for the delivery of trial transcripts in criminal trials in the Supreme Court and the District Court under your outsourced model? I am talking here about criminal trials.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is all subject to the procurement process. The government will put a time frame on it. We would expect that we would want it more efficient and more reliable and faster than is currently the case offered by the State Reporting Bureau. They are things that we are working on with the Chief Justice and the Chief Judge.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Have you had any discussions with them about the proposed time frames?

Mr BLEIJIE: No, that is all subject to the procurement process at the moment. My DG can correct me, but they are certainly involved in those discussions on the procurement process. They will probably see the document before it goes. We want to make sure that the procurement documents that are released in fact represent what the Chief Judge and the Chief Justice want. We want to make sure that any concerns that they may have are included in the documentation. That way, with whoever takes it on in the private sector or whoever wins the bid, we want to be satisfied that the service they are offering is the service that the Chief Justice, the Chief Judge and the profession want.

Mr WOODFORTH: I move the discussion to the coroner. Attorney, I refer to your answer to question of notice No. 10 and the addition of the Central Coroner. Attorney-General, will you outline any other measures that have been taken to improve the efficiency of the Office of the State Coroner?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. Coronial services are an important aspect of Queensland. The coroner investigates deaths in custody, unexplained deaths and so forth. We are certainly aware of the issues. I recall when in the shadow ministry reading the coronial service's annual report. Michael Barnes, the State Coroner, suggested that we probably should appoint an additional Central Coroner. I am pleased to say that we have in the Mackay area. That is to essentially make sure that every corner of Queensland is now covered with coronial services.

Can I say to the member that before the appointment of the Central Coroner 70 per cent of reportable deaths were reported to five full-time coroners based in Brisbane, Cairns and Southport. The remaining 30 per cent of deaths were reported to local magistrate coroners in 16 Magistrates Court registries across Central and Western Queensland. In recent years it has become more difficult for local coroners to fit coronial work around their normal magisterial duties. Since 2007-08 there has been a significant increase in demand for coronial services. From 2007-08 to 2011-12 deaths reported increased by 27 per cent. The numbers, for the benefit of the committee, were 3,514 to 4,461.

With that statistic we have also seen a growth in the delays. We say that any delay is really unacceptable and unnecessary. It is an unnecessary distress to family members. That is why the government took steps to appoint the additional coroner in Mackay. That person is David O'Connell. He has been sworn in by the Chief Magistrate. I attended the ceremony in Mackay. He has certainly got straight to work. He is working from the Mackay courthouse at the moment.

Miss BARTON: Attorney, could you please provide the committee with an update on the important work that is currently undertaken by the Office of the State Coroner including how many matters that office has dealt with in the last financial year?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. In terms of the performance of the State Coroner in 2011-12, as at 30 June 2012 there were 4,771 matters finalised compared with 4,408 in 2010-11. That were 363 more cases finalised in 2011-12 or an eight per cent increase. The clearance rate is 107 per cent. The SDS established actual is 102 per cent. That is an increase of seven per cent compared to 2010-11.

The SDS established actual is 13 per cent of pending coronial matters more than 24 months old. The target of five per cent was not reached. Factors affecting the ability to finalise investigations within 24 months included reliance on other agencies to provide autopsy, toxicological and police reports, coroners awaiting outcomes of other investigative processes, coroners awaiting outcomes of criminal proceedings before proceeding with inquests. I think we have seen notable cases recently where investigations and coronial work has had to be sent overseas for testing for our courts.

In August 2012 an additional full-time Central Coroner was appointed in Mackay. I think the fundamental element here is that before the Central Coroner was appointed in Mackay, in Central Queensland our magistrates were acting as magistrate coroners. So really from Caloundra to Proserpine was a void. When we went to the regional sittings of parliament in Mackay in 2011 we made the announcement about the Central Coroner. Next year—and it will take a little time as the coroner settles in and starts doing work—we should see a decrease in any burden or growth.

Mr CHOAT: I would just like to take you to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. My question is to the Attorney-General. Could you provide us with an update on the activities of the office and perhaps some detail on the number of issues that the office has dealt with in the last financial year?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you to the member for Ipswich West for the question. The ODPP is a particularly busy office with some quite lengthy and important murder trials that they are currently dealing with. The Director of Public Prosecutions prosecutes criminal matters in Queensland's Magistrates Courts only in Ipswich and Brisbane central and limited matters in Southport and in the District Court, the Supreme Court, the Mental Health Court, the Mental Health Review Tribunal, the Court of Appeal and the High Court of Australia. The office is structured into 15 criminal chambers, legal work units and one civil law team. Seven chambers are based in Brisbane, eight chambers in major regional centres with a suboffice in Mackay and the civil law team and the confiscations unit is based in Brisbane.

In relation to appeals, the ODPP provides advice to me regarding appeals in criminal matters from the Supreme and District Courts and decisions of the Mental Health Review Tribunal. The office also provides information to victims of crime to assist them in their dealings with the justice system.

The workload for the 2011-12 financial year was that they received 32,105 offences for prosecutions relating to 7,769 accused. On a monthly basis, the average number of accused referred to the ODPP was 648. The average number of charges referred to the office was 2,676 per month. The ODPP prepared and conducted 930 committal matters in the Brisbane, Ipswich and Southport Magistrates Court. In the Supreme, District and Childrens Court, 1,021 were conducted by the ODPP. As well there were 4,562 sentences and breaches and 392 legal arguments. A total of 631 appeals, not including Attorney-General appeals, were processed.

The office is particularly busy. You only have to pick up the paper and see some of the high-profile cases that the office has been involved in. In terms of resources, we have to make sure that ODPP is resourced sufficiently to make sure that it can continue to do the great job that it is doing.

Mr WATTS: Just staying with that office. Could you give us an update on the success of the Moynihan review, particularly with in reference to the office, and whether it is resolving matters more efficiently?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. The Moynihan reforms were conducted by former Justice Moynihan. They instituted certain things in the court. There was always going to be a two-phased approach. There were the first tranche of the Moynihan reforms which changed the jurisdictional limits for the courts—the Magistrates, District and Supreme Court. It changed the way that committals proceeded or did not proceed.

I have had some consultation of late with members of the bar and the profession who do have some issues with the new committal process. They want me to look at it. When a new reform is put in place—and it is fairly major reform—we do not always get it right, but you have to have the willingness and ability to work with the profession to work out ways to change things for the better in the future.

I will deal with a couple of issues with respect to the jurisdiction of the Magistrates Court. They have seen more less serious criminal matters being dealt with summarily. This is evidenced by a reduction in the total number of accused and offences referred to the ODPP for prosecution during the previous two reporting periods as follows: during the 2010-11 financial year, 39,849 charges relating to 10,075 accused were referred for prosecution; during the 2011-12 financial year, 32,105 charges relating to 7,769 accused were referred for prosecution.

The workload of the DPP in terms of the more serious and complex matters prosecuted in the District and Supreme Courts has remained relatively constant during the previous two reporting periods. The ODPP has experienced an increase in the number of appeals to the District Court. The Supreme Court civil lodgements have decreased due to the monetary limit changes in the jurisdiction, as I indicated, by the Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction Reform and Modernisation Act 2010. Accordingly, the Supreme Court civil finalisation matters have decreased. The Supreme Court civil active pending matters have decreased. The Supreme Court civil backlog as a percentage of active matters have decreased.

So it has had various impacts on each of the relevant jurisdictions. I am continuing to monitor those and particularly if we do the second tranche of Moynihan reforms what impact that will have. That discussion has not really started yet. I have told the profession to see how the first tranche of the reforms go before we jump in and set up the second tranche of reforms.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have some follow-up questions about the court recording and transcription services. I will follow on from what I was asking the Attorney previously. Attorney, I note in your diary that on 13 June you actually met with a Mr Peter Wyatt from Auscript, a company that provides court transcription services. What advice did he provide about court transcription services and the ability of his business to provide transcripts for court matters?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. I note the member for Inala is interested in my diary obtained through the RTI process.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Very interested.

Mr BLEIJIE: I hope she found it as entertaining as I do when I look at it every morning. Yes, I did meet with director of Auscript, which is a great Brisbane based company, I might add. This is part of a normal process where ministers meet with relevant stakeholders. They in fact deliver all Commonwealth court reporting transcripts. They in fact deliver QCAT transcripts. As part of the process, I obviously spoke to the president of QCAT and the deputy president of QCAT at the time, Judge Kingham. I was interested to see their views on the court reporting transcripts before the government proceeded down the route. Obviously I was not going to sign up to a policy position of outsourcing our transcription services if I was not convinced that it could be done. That was part of the process. I met with Auscript because they deliver those right around the Commonwealth with the Commonwealth government. In fact, the Commonwealth government have just recently retendered and given the tender to that particular company that the member raises. But also it was important for me to meet them because they do the transcription services for QCAT. We have to make sure we get it right before we outsource.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Was this a one-on-one private meeting or was their someone from the department in attendance at this meeting?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, there was. The manager of the State Reporting Bureau was at that meeting.

Ms PALASZCZUK: There is no notation in your diary that anyone was in attendance. Sorry, who was there?

Mr BLEIJIE: That is my diary. I suspect my diary will say that I am in attendance. The manager of the State Reporting Bureau, Kevin Meiklejohn, was at that meeting. It was a boardroom table. He was sitting there, Peter from Auscript was sitting here, I was sitting here and I suspect my chief of staff David was there too. There were four people in the room. Incidentally, following on from that, the manager of the State Reporting Bureau actually said that the State Reporting Bureau has had difficulties and has had issues. You only have to look at the annual reports of the Supreme Court over the last five years to see that not everyone is entirely happy with it. He offered that information up. I put to him directly why it has not been fixed and he said that it has never worked properly from the start. I point out that it was the former Labor government that introduced that new system in the State Reporting Bureau.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you met with him on 13 June. Have you met with any other court reporting service?

Mr BLEIJIE: Not to my knowledge. I do not think there is any other Brisbane based or Queensland based reporting service. I know there is a Western Australian court reporting transcription service. I think I have received correspondence from them. But since we have announced that we will be outsourcing, I probably would not meet with any of them including Auscript because there will be a proper government procurement process. It will be a fully open and transparent process. In fact when I was the shadow Attorney-General I saw Peter from Auscript as well. When you go to functions and you are there as shadow Attorney-General, as you will do, shadow Attorney-General, you meet various people.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I ask a question to Acting Director-General Terry Ryan? Mr Ryan, can you please outline the procurement process that will be followed in relation to the outsourcing of the court reporting service?

Mr Ryan: Yes. There is a procurement process underway. It is being led by Joanne Bugden, who is the Director of Reporting in the department. At the moment the specifications are being developed, and that is happening in consultation with members of the judiciary, as the Attorney indicated before.

Ms PALASZCZUK: There will be an open tender?

Mr Ryan: It will be an open tender process.

Ms PALASZCZUK: What is the time frame on that open tender? Do we have those finalised yet?

Mr Ryan: I do not have the details, sorry. Currently we are consulting with stakeholders to determine their business needs. There will need to be some legislative amendments introduced to facilitate outsourcing because currently the Recording of Evidence Act requires that it be done solely by the State Reporting Bureau. So there will be some legislative changes required. But the timetable is to have the outsource provider commence in March 2013.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Mr Ryan, how many court reporting staff have been sacked?

Mr Ryan: There have not been any staff—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I understand some people have already left.

Mr Ryan: Some staff have left. Some have moved into other roles within the department where that opportunity has been available.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let me rephrase the question. What is the total number of people who are currently employed in the court recording and transcription services?

Mr Ryan: My understanding is that there are 216 individuals, which equates to about 150 full-time equivalent staff.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Has there been any communication to them about the job losses?

Mr Ryan: Yes. On the day of the budget there were meetings with affected staff across the state and they were informed of the process through a video link. Obviously we need to retain staff. Staff have been very professional in continuing to work in the role. The actual timing of staff departures will be dependent on when the external provider commences.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sure. I am still trying to get to the heart of this matter in terms of the time frames for delivery of transcripts for criminal trials in the Supreme Court and District Court. Do you have any indications about what the turnaround is in relation to those matters?

Mr Ryan: We are consulting with the judiciary in terms of their expectations and that will form part of the specifications. So if it is currently a same-day transcript for criminal matters, I would expect that would be set out in the tender documentation.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Are there any concerns about confidentiality in relation to these criminal trials?

Mr Ryan: That would be dealt with in the documentation again. As the Attorney mentioned, other jurisdictions have successfully tendered out. Western Australia has for a number of years been using an external provider for transcripts and my understanding is that the judiciary there are quite happy with the service that is provided.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Chair, could I please call Mr Anthony Reilly, the Chief Executive Officer of Legal Aid Queensland? Mr Reilly, you may not be able to answer this question, but I will put it to you and just see if you can or not. Mr Reilly, could you please give the committee some insight into how transcripts are used on a day-to-day basis, particularly in criminal trials?

Mr Reilly: I do not feel able to provide a detailed account of that, I am sorry.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Who would be able to provide that answer, Attorney? Do you know?

Mr BLEIJIE: It is all different. Every matter before a court is different. We have QCAT, we have the Magistrates Court, we have the District Court, we have the Supreme Court and we have the QIRC tribunal. I am happy to take it on notice. We can get it. But I do not think anyone would be expecting anyone to know the ins and outs of every tribunal and court in Queensland because every matter is dealt with differently. However, in saying that, I continually get complaints from barristers who wait months to get transcripts under the State Reporting Bureau. That will not happen—

Ms PALASZCZUK: You get complaints. Can you detail those complaints?

Mr BLEIJIE: Do you want me to provide every letter that I have received in relation to complaints about the State Reporting Bureau? I think that is a bit hard to do.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No. You said that you received complaints. You need to now—

Mr BLEIJIE: I just did. I said I receive complaints from barristers who are waiting for transcripts for weeks and months. We deal with them and we try to get SRB to get them as soon as they can.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I ask on notice that you detail the number of complaints that you have received to your office?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, but it is incredibly—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you.

Mr BLEIJIE: If I can finish, Mr Chair. It is incredibly difficult because, for instance, yesterday at the swearing in of the new justice of the Supreme Court I had two complaints. This happens at social functions.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am asking for written complaints.

CHAIR: Let the Attorney answer the question. You have asked the question. Give him room to answer the question. You will have plenty of leeway to ask a question after that. Attorney?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chair. It happens all the time that people complain about all different forms of government services that as ministers we take direct responsibility for and we try to fix these matters. Can I advise the Leader of the Opposition that criminal trial transcripts are provided on the day generally so the trial can continue the next day.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney, just to clarify that standing order about providing an answer back to us, all I am after there is the written complaints that you have received from barristers about delays in the court reporting services.

Mr BLEIJIE: Can I suggest the Leader of the Opposition does an RTI and she can have everything from my office about every complaint she has—

Ms PALASZCZUK: No. This is an estimates hearing, with all due respect, Attorney. There is a standing order—

Mr BLEIJIE: We will not be able to have those details to her by the end of the day, Mr Chair. All my department are sitting behind me.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is within 24 hours, isn't it, Chair?

CHAIR: Would you like to take it on notice?

Mr BLEIJIE: I will take it on notice and we will get whatever details we can.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much, Attorney.

CHAIR: We will take that question on notice, Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have one more question in relation to this matter. Attorney, what safeguards are going to be in place to ensure court recordings containing sensitive material, such as in criminal organisation matters or where the Public Interest Monitor appears, are not able to be accessed by anyone who does not have an appropriate security clearance?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. Mr Chair, the Leader of the Opposition is acting like this is something new in Australia. Nearly every jurisdiction in every state and territory outsource their transcription services. This is nothing new. In fact Queensland is behind the times with respect to transcription—

Ms PALASZCZUK: We already have a professional system in place. That is what I am trying to get to the bottom of.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, nearly every jurisdiction in Australia has outsourced their transcription services, including the Labor Commonwealth government. It is nothing new. We are going about it on the same basis that other states and territories have done it. It is not happening until March next year. There will be a fully comprehensive process of procurement and all of these matters will be ironed out in the procurement process.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I just explain why I am actually pursuing this line of questioning, Attorney. You may or may not be aware that on 22 June 2010 in the *Sydney Morning Herald* there was an article that was entitled 'Ex-cop and the million-dollar contracts', which referred to transcription services outsourced in New South Wales to a former police officer who had been convicted of corruption by ICAC and was found guilty of conspiracy to bribe a police officer and was awaiting trial on a robbery charge. A company run by his daughter's partner, his daughter and his wife also received lucrative contracts from the New South Wales police, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and ICAC. I am happy to table a copy of the article. I seek leave to table that article.

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney-General, you may be talking about this not being new, but I am concerned about the safeguards to ensure that what your government is pursuing, which is outsourcing these services, is not going to go down the same path as what happened in New South Wales. So these are legitimate questions. I am trying to guarantee that this will not happen. It is a legitimate line of questioning.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. The member ought not be concerned about those issues.

CHAIR: I call the member for Yeerongpilly.

Mr JUDGE: Will the Attorney-General expand on the important work that crown law undertakes for the government including billable hours and any increase in that?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. As old as Queensland itself, crown law has been an essential part of the state's public sector for more than 150 years. Crown law provides advice on key policy areas such as health, education, environment and resources, as well as assisting government agencies following several natural disasters. Crown law continues to represent the state with significant civil and criminal legal matters before the state's courts such as the *Pacific Adventurer* oil spill, native title claim applications and also claims relating to dangerous prisoners applications and relating to international custody disputes.

Crown law will continue to play an important and vital role. I know in my own experience of crown law that the service they provide is nothing but great. They provide advice not only to me as Attorney-General but also to other agencies and departments. Agencies and departments may request advice from me that I am reliably advised from crown law. I note that tomorrow night crown law are holding their awards night and I am very pleased to be able to be at those awards and present those awards.

Apart from what they do on a legal basis, crown law also has a fantastic choir, who at the opening of the Queensland Elizabeth II Courts of Law provided great entertainment. They have a very, very good choir. I pay tribute to the choir members of crown law.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. We might break for a cup of coffee and come back at 11.45 am.

Proceedings suspended from 11.27 am to 11.45 am

CHAIR: I call the Attorney-General.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thought I would point out for the committee that, in relation to one of the questions which the member for Indooroopilly asked about youth offending, I gave a figure of \$600,000. The zeros were muddled. It is \$6,000, not \$600,000—just in case the community group was watching online and thought it had an influx of additional money. So I correct the record. It is \$6,000 not \$600,000.

CHAIR: Thank you for correcting that, Attorney.

Mr WOODFORTH: Attorney, we were speaking before the break about crown law. You answered a question expanding on the important work that crown law undertakes for the government. Further to that in relation to briefing counsel, can you advise the committee what steps have been taken to ensure value for money for the services provided?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Nudgee for the question. It is an important question. Crown law briefs either senior members of the bar or junior members of the profession, and sometimes they brief external solicitors or some agencies. We have tied work and untied work with crown law. A lot of the matters are tied, which means crown law does all the government work, constitutional law and advice to the Attorney and so forth. A lot of it is untied so it can go to private firms. However, when we deal with briefing counsel, which are members of the bar, either senior or junior, I have implemented a couple of things.

Crown law had a policy that it was best to brief senior counsel at appropriate times. We have changed it to essentially say that junior counsel should be briefed, unless it can be shown to me that there is a real reason for briefing senior counsel. So, therefore, we save money. But it also helps the junior members of the bar because a lot of them—most of them—are quite up to the job of providing government legal advice when we brief out from crown law. So that was one of the things we did. We looked at briefing fewer senior counsel but briefing more junior counsel.

If crown law decides they want to brief senior counsel for a particular purpose—for instance, the extension of a lot of the dangerous prisoner orders are dealt with by Peter Davis, the vice-president of the Bar Association. The former government briefed him. He knows all about those issues. So crown law at their liberty can come to me and say that they want to brief senior counsel, which I can approve or decline. The first thing I said is that at first instance we probably should be briefing junior counsel. The second thing is we have issued two directives across Queensland. In regional areas of Queensland the preference should be members of the bar in those areas. That really encourages local members of the bar and the lawyers in the profession to realise they are getting a slice of the pie of government work. For instance, if we have particular work in regional Queensland or rural Queensland, if there are members of the bar, the preference is that they get briefed, not members of the bar in Brisbane. That is particularly supported by the Bar Association.

The other directive I have issued is that when we do brief counsel the two overriding principles are merit and value for money. I know that is a change of policy direction from the former government in terms of directions to crown law. They had a policy that at first instance whatever work was being done you had to brief—with all respect to women in this room—a woman. My view is that it should be merit based and it should be value for money. So the direction now to crown law is that, when you are looking at briefing counsel, it is one based on merit, not sex, religion or politics and, secondly, that they can do the job.

Miss BARTON: Attorney, you somewhat answered my question but I wonder if you might be able to provide some more detail on the government's new policy in terms of engaging private counsel and private members of the bar for the government's work.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Broadwater for the question. This started under the former government with respect to looking at new proposed policies for fee structure. With government departments, crown law engaged barristers to undertake legal work on behalf of the government. As I have said, the process for this engagement is inconsistent, inefficient and inequitable and did not make the use of the government's significant expenditure on legal services.

Crown law is fundamental to the operation of government and the advice we receive in terms of our policy objectives. We are considering at the moment—and this was under consideration by the previous government—a new policy for the fee structure of barristers who undertake legal work on behalf of the government. The policy is aimed at better value for money for taxpayers. My understanding was they were looking at working with the Bar Association on a fee structure. All I can say today to the member for Broadwater is that I am keen to look at it. If there are better ways to achieve efficiencies and value for money, then I certainly will. The talk with the previous government was about the individual government rates for each barrister who undertakes work on behalf of the government. I have not continued that discussion with the Bar Association. I am happy to have that discussion but I wanted to deal with the immediate priorities of value for money and merit based.

Mr CHOAT: I refer to QCAT and ask the Attorney-General whether he could provide the committee with an update on the statutory review of the QCAT legislation that is underway.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. QCAT is the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal set up under the previous government. We have to conduct a review, which I am in the process of establishing now. It is a statutory review. We have been developing the terms of reference with the President of QCAT. I think we supported the establishment of QCAT. There are some issues which we are still ironing out, one of which is that in the review I would be keen to look at the president and the deputy president—respectively a Supreme Court judge and a District Court judge. We have found some difficulty in filling roles in terms of the deputy president role, because you have to fill it with a District Court judge. If there is no District Court judge who wants to take on the role—and I do not want to force people to take on the role—then you would have to appoint another District Court judge.

I think there are arguments for us to look at the appellant jurisdiction. The appellant jurisdiction in QCAT at the moment involves a District Court judge, because a lot of it is medical work and appeals, and the president does a lot of the other appeal work that generally would be in the ambit of the Supreme Court. We will review QCAT, and I undertake to make that review public. It is likely to go on the open and accountable government website that the assistant minister is establishing.

I am also looking at whether we should expand the role of lawyers and barristers in QCAT—whether we should look at giving capacity for representation to people who want representation in QCAT. I am very conscious that that is supported by the Law Society and the Bar Association. However, at the same time this is meant to be a lean, mean justice machine and we would not want to put anyone in the situation where you have someone prepped with a lawyer and someone who cannot afford to be prepped with a lawyer battling against each other in a particular case.

I have started a conversation with the Bar Association and the Law Society to try to ascertain whether we can develop a scheme where we would have barristers or lawyers operating pro bono within QCAT. If we did implement a scheme where lawyers were able to represent people, then everyone would have representation and no-one would be left out. That is going to form part of the review. We will talk about regional services. QCAT is still very Brisbane-centric and I think that is a big problem. We have a Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal with most of its members and senior members in Brisbane. At times we send people on circuit or dealing in the Magistrates Courts across Queensland, but I think we have to look at the regional services that we offer—as I have said, the appellant jurisdiction—and generally the powers and responsibilities of QCAT. QCAT has been implemented, and we are certainly not going to unscramble the egg and set up the 21 tribunals that existed prior to that. I think it is timely that a review takes place now. We will make sure that it is operating as efficiently as possible.

Mr WATTS: I have a question in relation to the Queensland Industrial Relations Court. What is being done to deal with the increasing number of matters that are coming before that jurisdiction?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Toowoomba North for the question. The Queensland Industrial Relations Commission is the body that has the Industrial Court attached to it with President Hall. There are commissioners in the Industrial Relations Commission who deal with matters such as trading hours and in recent times who are dealing with unions and EB negotiations. So there has been a lot of work created. They also deal with WorkCover reviews and Q-Comp appeals. If people are not satisfied with their decisions in WorkCover or Q-Comp, the QIRC looks at those issues.

There have not been any appointments made for some time until recently where we have appointed additional members to the commission. We have also changed legislation so that the vice president, Dianne Linnane, deals with the administration. As I set out in parliament when we moved the

legislation, it is not unordinary that you would have a court—for instance, a Supreme Court—that has Justice Byrne as the judge administrator administering the court and making sure that matters are listed. The QIRC really did not have one of those. Historically it had one and then hasn't had one; then it has and it hasn't. We have reinstated that. Vice President Linnane is in control of the lists now.

What we have effectively had to do, because she has had a reduction in her capacity to hear matters, is follow through with some additional appointments. I was very pleased to announce that Dan O'Connor will be serving as a deputy president. Dan O'Connor is a barrister and has for many years been the CEO of the Bar Association of Queensland. He is highly qualified and skilled to fulfil that role in the commission. He is also the deputy president or vice president of the RNA. We have also appointed Gary Black as a commissioner. Gary Black has for years been serving as CEO of the National Retail Association. Melinda Knight, who has a broad policy experience, has also been appointed as a commissioner. She is a former director of media and public affairs at the Australian Mines and Metals Association and has previously worked as an industrial relations practitioner and policy adviser across a range of industries. I think those three additional members will help to accommodate the additional workload of the QIRC. For the committee's benefit, remember that the government has recently changed a lot of the jurisdiction from the Public Service Commission to the QIRC. So that is why those appointments were necessary.

CHAIR: We might just change the subject now. Attorney, could you brief the committee on your Safe Work Week activities for the next year?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the chair for his question. These are part of the government's commitment to promoting safe workplaces. Safe Work Week will officially be held across Australia from 21 to 27 October. However, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is hosting state-wide events over the whole month of October encouraging all working Queenslanders to get involved in improving health and safety in their workplaces.

Safe Work Week 2012 was launched at the workplace health and safety symposium in Brisbane on 2 October, with 77 paid attendants and 250 industry representatives. Since then until the end of October, directors, owners and CEOs from Queensland companies, associations and unions have been coming together to discuss workplace health and safety at regional leadership forums working with Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. These leaders are best placed to change their industries from the top down. We certainly do not want to keep coming in as a regulator. We want industry to take the lead. I note that we have had breakfasts across Queensland on the Gold Coast on 3 October, in Toowoomba on the 4th and in Caloundra on 5 October. It is great that I have had members of parliament representing me at those forums.

Further leadership forums will be held in Ipswich, Bundaberg, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns and Brisbane. Some 300 people have paid \$35 to attend this forum. So we have made a lot of savings in this. One of the other things I did with the workplace health and safety forums is that, instead of government paying for everyone to attend, we have actually started to tell people that we want them to participate, that industry should lead it and that they could help and pay the way. I think it is testament to that that 300 people have signed up to pay \$35 to attend that forum in Brisbane which will close off the Safe Work Week activities.

Our safety ambassador across Queensland is none other than Mal Meninga, who also features on the Safe Work Week campaign materials. He attends these breakfasts and forums and is a great ambassador. There are things that Workplace Health and Safety Queensland are doing right across this month to better protect Queensland in terms of our key message. We want all employers and employees particularly to heed the message of 'what is your most important reason?' That can be interpreted however the employee wishes it. What is their important reason for coming home safely from work? To see their family, their children, their husband, their wife, their partner. So we ask people to remember and ask the question: what is your most important reason? Then we must make sure that industry leads us in that capacity to make sure they deliver safe workplaces for our employees.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney.

Mr JUDGE: Attorney, can you provide an update to the committee on the Zero Harm at Work Leadership Program, including departmental resources that have been provided to encourage best practice safety initiatives in Queensland?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Yeerongpilly for the question. The Zero Harm at Work Leadership Program is an initiative of the Workplace Health and Safety Board under Vince O'Rourke, and it is facilitated by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. The concept of zero harm means no harm to anyone any time while at work. It is very much a big target—no harm at work—but what we are really wanting to do is target industry leaders again, as I said before, to really participate and drive this.

These zero harm at work forums that we hold around the state are very well attended. I think more than a couple of hundred of Queensland's leading industries are involved in this zero harm at work, and I have had the pleasure of attending two or three of these breakfasts. They have been fantastically attended and you learn a lot as well. Concrete Australia, for instance, have given us their

whole project overview of how they have gone from the cement trucks coming into the workshops and people climbing up on the rim of the wheel and leaning over to do the mechanical work, to now they have developed machinery to take them above the motor so they are not ready to fall off. They told us about another thing they have implemented. Although truck drivers like the shiny chrome and silver, they have heeded to the warnings of Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and this zero harm and they have put non-slip on a lot of their steps. It is the simple stuff like that, and governments should not be coming in and regulating people. We actually say to industry, 'You're in it every day. You understand what your workers need. Be with us on this journey to help employees.'

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Chair, I would like to put a question to our Queensland Ombudsman, Mr Phil Clarke. I refer to the service delivery statement and in particular your attendance before the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee some time ago. During that hearing, I questioned you along the lines of the progress that has been achieved in relation to the Ombudsman's recommendation that the practice of providing extended or full-time out-of-home care to certain disabled children by way of a child protection order under the Child Protection Act be reviewed at the earliest opportunity. During that hearing, you indicated that you were working with the government. I wondered if you had any further information that you might be able to share with us about how things are progressing.

Mr Clarke: Thank you for the question. I have had a recent update in regard to that particular matter. The recommendation was made initially as a result of an investigation which came about from a complaint. I originally made the recommendation to the department and received a positive, and the department was working with the government. Last week, I think it was—or it may have been a week before—I received the most current advice. That is, that the director-general would now like to meet with me to talk about how that matter be progressed. I have not yet had that meeting, but I am expecting it in the next couple of weeks. Subsequent to that, I hope to be in a position to provide a detailed response as to the time frame in which we could expect some of those changes.

In addition I also took the opportunity to make a submission in regard to that particular recommendation to the Carmody review—noting that the children's commissioner had made similar submissions. So I took the opportunity to bring that matter to the commissioner's attention in the hope that it might get some additional gravity through that channel as well.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Clarke. Maybe when parliament comes back in November the Attorney-General might have an important statement to share with us. Minister, could I take you to your answer to question on notice No. 20 where you spoke about the duplication of the federal government initiatives and Skilling Queenslanders for Work and the Get Set for Work program. Can I just say that my experience with these two programs, whether they are called duplications or whatever, is that in my electorate on the Sunshine Coast there were amazing results. The department might say it is a duplication of federal services, but all I can say is that my experience showed that they were very effective programs to deal with young people who were simply falling between the cracks.

I note in your answer to my question you referred to how the new partnership between Youth Justice Services, the Department of Education, Training and Employment, Queensland Health and other key partner agencies would pick up the slack. What spare capacity do you believe there is in these services to pick up the slack that those two programs were previously providing?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Nicklin for the question, and I note that I have provided an answer. However, we have had to reprioritise some things in Queensland. I note that not all of the decisions have been popular and not all of the decisions have been supported, certainly not by members of the opposition, but we have to look at the duplication and I think Queenslanders expect us to do that. If there is duplication, if there are inefficiencies and if there are programs the federal government should be funding that the state government was forking out money for, then it is the responsibility of the federal government. I do not think it is any secret that this government takes a very dim view of the federal government's continual display of arrogance to the states in terms of wanting us to refer all sorts of powers. The latest one was that they wanted me to refer the power for unexplained wealth. We have rejected that, as has every other state and territory. The federal government have to take responsibility for these matters and if they want these programs they want got to pay for it.

I just say to the member for Nicklin that, for these types of things and the capacity you ask about, I think there is great capacity for government to develop better programs in the future. Look at the \$2 million we are delivering for the boot camps and other justice initiatives. I think there is capacity and we can work better with the non-government sector to deliver certain programs. You have seen that a couple of programs have been cut, not necessarily in my portfolio, and the private sector has come and picked it up.

Mr WELLINGTON: Just following on that, what sort of review will your department be undertaking to evaluate how effective these new programs are going to be? I realise the dollars are tight and I realise you, the Premier and other ministers have spoken about how you have to find new dollars and cut programs, but it seems to me that a lot of the preventative programs which I thought were effective on the ground have been cut. Unfortunately, I do not believe a lot of those people will be caught up in your replacements and I see them being at the other end where next minute they will be taking their places in

our prisons. I know you talk about the boot camp and you have a view on how successful that will be, but it seems to me that we are going from a preventative approach—rightly or wrongly—to what will be, in time, a crisis approach where more money will have to be spent to try to respond to people because we have not been able to catch them early enough.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. I think this is the whole point though of the early intervention and the boot camps. It is a trial and I want it to work. I am very optimistic. I want it to work. I am travelling around the state with other members of parliament and other members of the judiciary, and we are meeting as many youth organisations who deal with youth justice as we can. One of the biggest issues though is not necessarily the preventative approach but what happens to the kids who are already in the system afterwards. At the moment they are going to a detention centre and they are coming out. I am very much in favour of looking at the boot camps with the preventative approach and the early intervention at the schools, but we also have to look for the kids who come out of detention and mentor them and get them out of this idea of this college of crime, because that is when they grow up. They say that if they are under 20 there is hope, but if they are over 20—and they have gone from the 17- to 20-year-old bracket—then it is very hard to take them into line.

However, in saying that, if I would just make the point that the offending rates of young people have not necessarily gone down despite all these programs that everyone is offering. I genuinely say to the member for Nicklin that one thing I found about this issue of youth justice with the boot camps particularly is that there are so many programs operating around Queensland. For instance, you may not be aware, because I was not, but two weeks ago when I was in Beaudesert I found out that there are something like 12 to 15 boot camps or youth early intervention programs operating around the lake. I cannot recall the name of the lake down there, but they are operating down there. No-one knows about them. I think, if anything, this has really propped up the ability for people to talk to government.

Mr WELLINGTON: While I have the time, Minister, I note that liquor, gambling and fair trading is part of your responsibility. I suppose my question is about the out-of-control behaviour of people under the influence of alcohol. Our police are challenging to respond. Are you able to exercise your ministerial powers and start to pull some of these licences from some of these providers who just simply continue to serve alcohol to intoxicated people who then get into strife and end up in our courts and simply regret that they even went out at night?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. Through you, Mr Chair, I benefited from being on the 2009 parliamentary inquiry into alcohol related violence that was led by Barbara Stone at the time. It was a fundamental inquiry in that it went right across Queensland and we travelled to many licensee establishments. You have seen certain things happen since that inquiry—the establishment of the drink-safe precincts and the glassing starting to go from venues. A lot of licensees had already started that process though. I think by far the majority of licensees want safe places because they want young people to go out and have a good time without fear or threat. No-one wants a glassing incident, an assault incident or any other incident because it reflects poorly on the licensee.

I think we need to target the licensees who have a particular problem. There is a two-prong approach that I am tackling with this issue. One is that industry has certainly been overburdened by regulation over the years with licences. You would have members in your own constituency or P&C nights or the STEMM fundraiser that you and I go to every year. The bureaucracy involved around getting community liquor permits for those people to have great community events and all they are trying to fund raise is overwhelming. So the government is really looking at how we can ease that burden for our communities and trust principals and P&Cs to be able to have trivia nights in their establishments without the need particularly to go through the bureaucracy of liquor licence and gaming. I have asked for a culture change to happen in the office of liquor and gaming. There is certainly at the moment a very reactionary and compliance approach. I want liquor licensing to be more like Workplace Health and Safety in terms of proactively working with industry.

Members may recall that I made a commitment in parliament that I would travel to some certain establishments in the Valley and have a look at particular venues, including one which will remain anonymous today, so I did. Last Friday night, the member for Brisbane Central, Mr Cavallucci, took me down. We had an inspector of police there and we had venue operators and licensees and we walked around and looked at these issues. Industry knows it is an issue, and particularly in the drink-safe precincts. They have seen that anecdotally the evidence is suggesting that it is working. We have to work out how we can in the future fund these programs because although anecdotally it is showing they are working we have got to find the money for the groups like the Chill Out Zone and the ChaplainWatch in the Valley and the CBD. They want us to continue it, and we have got to try to find the money from February next year.

There are ways that I can have liquor licensing very much target rogue operators, and that is exactly what we need to do. To do that, I think we need to work with the people who are doing a good job and who want to participate and actually make things safer. We need to assist them and help them out proactively. They also want to target the rogue operators, which certainly liquor licensing will be doing. It is a long answer to a short question but it is such a broad issue dealing with the regulatory environment and also alcohol related violence. I also think we should not just be reactionary to every incident that happens.

Mr WELLINGTON: My question was not intended to focus on the school P&Cs or the Mapleton Bowls Club, which is a purely voluntary bowls club that is trying to grapple with the compliance requirements. You have my total support to reduce some of that compliance for some of those organisations which have no history of problems. Our P&Cs and some of our caravan park facilities have no history of problems with regard to the sale of alcohol. It was more about some of these rogue operators that are providing alcohol. You only have to see it on the news in the Valley, in the city or in the mall. Someone is giving them alcohol; they are not drinking alcohol at home and then driving into the mall to run amuck.

Mr BLEIJIE: Following on from that, you raise a good point. In fact, there is a lot of drinking prior to going to these establishments. On a Friday or Saturday night you can have upwards of 50,000 people in the Valley in the drink-safe precinct. What a lot of people now do is what they call 'preload'. They buy less expensive grog from the liquor stores or from the local bottle. They meet at someone's house. They all start the process; they might have a designated driver. By the time they get to the Valley or the drink-safe precincts, a lot of them are half-tanked and then they start drinking. It is very hard for people with regard to the responsible service of alcohol at that point. Later on they will obviously know. The stats are showing us that a lot of kids are now preloading before they actually go to these establishments because it is cheaper. Whereas you and I may have gone out to a club at nine o'clock, the young people now seem to be wanting to start the clubs at midnight.

Mr WELLINGTON: I have a final question. In relation to the importance of surveillance cameras, would you in your ministerial responsibility support or investigate ways that the state government can bring about the proliferation of surveillance cameras in public spaces with our councils, or would you pass that over to the Minister for Police, who will be questioned later this afternoon?

Mr BLEIJIE: As minister responsible for liquor licensing, I totally support CCTV cameras. I have seen them in operation. I know there is a debate in Caloundra on the Sunshine Coast as to whether they should have CCTV and the benefits that they may or may not bring. I have seen nothing but great benefits from CCTV cameras. If there is some capacity that we can assist—I know when I was talking to one of the inspectors in the Valley last Friday night they were saying that there are a couple of black spots where they would like cameras. They do set a deterrent—absolutely. I am convinced that they set a deterrent. Also if there is an issue in terms of evidence for the court, it makes it a lot easier if there is video surveillance and light. One of the biggest issues they have in the Valley is the lack of toilets, but I know the council is working on that at the moment with the member for Brisbane Central.

CHAIR: I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney, I refer to page 1 of the SDS, which is essentially the legal aspects of your ministerial and portfolio responsibilities. I note that on 10 May 2012 you met with the Ally Group and in attendance was Rob Borbidge, Bruce Clarke and Joanne Rees. Can I confirm that Rob Borbidge is obviously the former Premier?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I also note that Rob Borbidge is listed as a registered lobbyist, and I seek leave to table that.

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Everything is aboveboard there and he actually lists the Ally Group as one of his clients. Did Mr Borbidge attend the meeting as a lobbyist?

Mr BLEIJIE: The Ally Group is a client of Mr Borbidge and I expect his attendance would be there as their lobbyist. However, in saying that, every lobbyist whom I meet gets added to my ministerial lobbyist register. I am happy to provide that. My office would have noted that because a lobbyist is required to tell us at the meeting whether or not they are a registered lobbyist. He did and that would have been added to my register.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I just explore it a bit further? Under the protocol of the former Labor government, for example, when I was a minister and a lobbyist met with me, you are correct that they would notify you; they would fill out a form. Also, if they met with me a note would have to go in my diary noting that the lobbyist was in assistance. The register was kept of all meetings with lobbyists in my office and a form outlining that meeting was also sent to the Premier's office. Is this the same protocol that your government now follows and if not, why not?

Mr BLEIJIE: Can I say that we are not the Labor Party; we are not the former government. I have very much an open door policy. I try to see as many people who want to see me as possible. If they do not tell my secretary or the diary secretary at the time the appointment is made, how on earth would they know that they are a lobbyist? The lobbyist rightfully discloses it to me at the meeting because they are meeting with me and I am the minister. Then I put it on my lobby register. I do not know—

Ms PALASZCZUK: So it is not recorded in your diary and you do not send a form to the Premier's office?

Mr BLEIJIE: I am not going to tell my staff to go back into my diary after every meeting and put in information that would be for the benefit of the member for Inala for an RTI submission. You have got the diary. You have seen what is in there. Mr Chairman, I make the point—

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you are not following the protocols of the former Labor government?

Mr BLEIJIE: I try not to follow much of what the former Labor government did. It is not in my DNA—

Ms PALASZCZUK: We are actually talking about integrity and ethical matters here, Attorney, with all due respect.

Mr BLEIJIE: I do my best to avoid anything that the Labor Party did. Everything was done correctly. The Ally Group with whom I met provides a form of legal service. They advise government in terms of better and more efficient ways to deliver services. In fact, I think they have been contracted by Labor governments across Australia. Rob Borbidge made the introduction. He had the meeting. The diary says I met with Rob Borbidge. There are not too many Rob Borbidges who are former Premiers of Queensland. I think anyone can understand who that is. Then I filled out the lobby register. What more does the Labor Party want us to do? There was also—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am just trying to establish if you were following the exact same protocol. That is all, Attorney, and obviously you are not.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am required to put lobbyists on my register if I meet with them. I have done that. My office has done that and we always do that. I am not going to expect my diary secretary to go into every diary appointment after each meeting. The diary is essentially for meetings so I know what is happening during the day. In terms of what happens after the meeting, I follow the exact protocol that I have to, and that is I put the lobbyist on my register.

We heard a question earlier from the Leader of the Opposition with respect to meetings. She did not direct a question to me, but it was about meetings that ministers may have with donors to political parties. The Labor Party used to have a policy in this grand scheme of integrity and accountability where they would not have functions where people had to pay the cash for access. I tell you what, it all turned around when Murray Watt needed a little bit of money for the seat that he was in. They organised a little function in a little restaurant that the Premier attended and Murray Watt attended, and guess what? People paid to see the Premier and the former member for Everton. I think there is a little bit of hypocrisy here with being lectured on accountability and integrity when I have done everything right and there are no secrets about who I meet.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney, all I was doing was merely seeing if the same protocols were being established under your LNP government that existed under the previous Labor government. You indicated that you were happy to table that register of lobbyists that you have met with. Can I take that on notice, Chair? You offered before that you were happy to table that.

CHAIR: Minister, are you willing to take that on notice?

Mr BLEIJIE: I am happy to take it on notice. Can I just point out that I would love the opposition leader to direct me in the budget documents of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General where my diary or a meeting with Rob Borbidge is mentioned in terms of relevance.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You are the state's Attorney-General. You met with the Ally Group. They provide legal services. A lobbyist attended. I was merely finding out whether the same strict guidelines were being followed by the LNP government that were being followed by the former Labor government. Chair, are you happy for me to keep going?

CHAIR: Yes, keep going.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney, I refer to page 24 of the 2012-13 Queensland state budget SDS. Would you please inform the committee of the full process in relation to any decisions made about possible courthouse closures since you have taken office?

Mr BLEIJIE: This question has come as a complete surprise as it did in parliament weeks ago. It is no secret that there was a departmental leak in my department that leaked relevant draft media releases that I had not seen. The budget has been delivered and Queenslanders saw there were no courthouses closed in Queensland.

Ms PALASZCZUK: My question now is to the acting director-general. Mr Ryan, was the Attorney-General's office ever provided with the draft media statement entitled 'Justice to save \$2.4 million on surplus courts', which was approved on 28 July 2012?

Mr Ryan: Yes, the Attorney's media adviser was provided with that statement.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Did you ever have any discussions with the Attorney-General about possible courthouse closures in general as a cost-saving method rather than in relation to specific courthouses?

Mr Ryan: Yes there was a range of options developed for savings as part of the budget process.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sorry, could you detail the extent of those discussions?

Mr Ryan: I think the discussions were in the form of options in terms of potential savings that may be achieved from the operations of courthouses in some locations.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So locations were discussed with the Attorney-General?

Mr Ryan: I am sorry?

Ms PALASZCZUK: So locations of courthouses were discussed with the Attorney-General?

Mr Ryan: Yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So Attorney-General, do you accept that these discussions about closures did occur?

Mr BLEIJIE: Of course they occurred. We were in the preparation of a budget. We asked our department to provide any efficiencies or savings. So the department came up with a range of options which, as the minister responsible, I either accepted or rejected. They all go to the Cabinet Budget Review Committee. The courthouse closures were not approved by me, hence I set out a press release saying there would be no courthouse closures in this budget. It has been aired in public numerous times and I have aired it in the parliament numerous times that I have not closed any courthouses. I was asked, 'Were they considered?' Of course; everything was considered. Everything was considered including courthouse closures, but I chose not to close any courthouses. It is unfortunate that there was a departmental leak, but that happens. We get on with life. The reality is that no courthouses were closed. However, I seek leave to table a copy of a map that I have already tabled in parliament showing some little purple dots.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We have seen that before.

Mr BLEIJIE: For the benefit of the opposition leader, what is highlighted here is the Labor Party's closure of courthouses and justice service centres across Queensland in the nineties—not the Liberal National Party, the Labor Party. Again, they would have considered it as a part of their budget process back in the nineties, but guess what? They closed courthouses. I considered it a part of this budget process and I did not close any courthouses.

CHAIR: I call the member for Toowoomba North.

Mr WATTS: Attorney, just to take you back to the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation—

CHAIR: Excuse me, Minister, you have to table the documents.

Mr BLEIJIE: I did.

CHAIR: You need to seek leave to table.

Mr BLEIJIE: I did say I seek leave to table the documents.

CHAIR: I am sorry. I beg your pardon.

Mr WATTS: Just back to the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation, as a former proud publican, I am particularly interested in the drink-safe precinct trial and any statistics that you can report back to us as to how successful the trial has been.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. I know that, as a former publican, the member does have a particular interest in these issues. The drink safe precincts are continuing in three locations across Queensland until the end of November—Surfers Paradise, the Valley and Townsville. We have 14 months of statistics. People I talk to in those areas say that they really like the drink safe precincts because there is additional overtime for police so there are men and women in blue on the street who can react to things more quickly. Also, in the Valley and other areas there are non-profit organisations—Chill Out Zone and Lance at ChaplainWatch—providing great services.

The drink safe precinct trial was due to end at the end of November. We have announced that we will extend the trial to the end of February 2013. The extension of the trial has created some difficulties, one of which, obviously, is finances. We have asked the police to reorganise their overtime so that during the week, at the quiet times, they may have not as many men and women in blue out on the beat but save that overtime for the weekends to get them through to February. We are currently in discussions—I know that the minister for community services, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and my department—with the non-government sector, who were provided funds. Bear in mind, this is an \$8.5 million trial. So we are in discussions with them at the moment about how they can continue to operate from November to February with existing resources.

Anecdotally, people like the drink safe precincts. I think there is some tinkering we can do. What we have to do is get industry to participate. Come February next year I would like to be in a position to continue a form of drink safe precinct, but we have to make sure we have available funds to see their continuation.

Mr WATTS: I refer to expanding the trial or putting some of those processes into areas that may not need to be declared a drink safe precinct. I was chair of the Liquor Industry Action Group in Toowoomba for a period of time. We worked with the police locally to do that, and we also received some funding to provide community service, chill-out zones and things like that. Do you see that as a possibility going forward for areas that may not need the full sanctioning but may need some support?

Mr BLEIJIE: Absolutely.

Mr WATTS: One of the things that has stressed the industry over a period of time is the knee-jerk and reactionary legislative agenda in relation to alcohol that was pursued by the former government, whereby people were named and shamed before any proof was submitted or even legislation passed in relation to glassing accidents. Just in relation to the bureaucratic red tape that evolved under Labor and the increased compliance costs for very little outcome, what sorts of impacts do you see on the cost of doing business in Queensland and where do you think we might be able to reduce that by simplifying some of the bureaucracy and the red tape that was forced upon the industry by the previous government?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question and, again, for his interest in this area of law reform. As I was answering the member for Nicklin earlier in terms of the issue of liquor licensing, it is no secret that the regulatory burden on liquor licence venues and licensees has been on the increase, particularly under the Labor Party. The Labor Party had a view with these sorts of things that if anything went wrong or anything appeared on the front page of a newspaper or on the radio or TV you should immediately react and ban things or ban people or slap licensees when by far the majority are doing the right thing. We saw that even during the committee inquiry into alcohol related violence. The former government were making announcements about the very things the parliamentary committee was inquiring into. So I think for too long the culture has been more about reaction and compliance than about proactively working with industry.

I have recently established an expert panel on liquor licensing red-tape reduction to be chaired by Geoff Harley. That panel had its first meeting yesterday. It comprises industry leaders, representatives from the Hotels Association and the Casino Association as well as representatives of the community sector. Their terms of reference will essentially be to work out ways we can reduce and streamline the regulatory burden in terms of liquor licensing across a range of spheres but also to save business money. We understand that this type of industry is particularly important to the Queensland economy, particularly for tourism. As I have indicated, tourism is one of the key pillars of our economy.

So we are looking at phase 1 initiatives followed by phase 2 initiatives. We have already implemented some elements of red-tape reduction in terms of the offices of liquor licensing and gaming to speed up processes. For the next couple of months the expert panel will be talking to Queenslanders, talking to businesspeople, and trying to get the state back on track in terms of reducing the regulatory burden currently suffered by those in the industry.

Mr WATTS: A few years ago we saw the introduction of liquor licence permits by the former government as it clamoured to fill its black hole of debt. What measures are we looking at to assist the industry and where are we at with liquor licences, payment processes and the other forms of regulatory burden around that going forward?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. One of the things we have done is abolish the Queensland Liquor and Gaming Commission. An application for a liquor licence went to the Liquor and Gaming Commission. The problem was that it met once a month. That is why we have such a backlog in approvals. A restaurant in your electorate may apply for a licence that is not approved for six weeks. They are the sorts of mundane matters I am trying to target. It may even be the case that a restaurant has been open previously and has then been sold. We want to make it easier for them to process the transfer of the liquor licence, particularly if the former owners did not have any problem. Also, a restaurant may have closed but the premise is still in tact; the bar is still there. When new people come into it, they have to go through a whole application process. We want to streamline that. Basically, with the liquor commission gone that responsibility will revert to my department. We will make sure that those matters are addressed in a far more timely and efficient manner.

Recently I was at TattsBet, which has developed an application for iPhones and iPads for betting. It took quite some time to get through the process with liquor and gaming. At the same time, the Northern Territory betting company did a similar thing. They had so much less regulation that they got theirs approved in a far more efficient and faster manner. That is what I would like OLGR to be in Queensland. We are in the process of working through those issues.

Mr CHOAT: Attorney-General, while we are talking about liquor and gaming regulation, could you provide us with information on activities related to the Gambling Community Benefit Fund, which I know is very important to a lot of community groups in electorates right across Queensland? Could you give us an indication of the grants that are offered to various not-for-profit organisations?

Mr BLEIJIE: There are four funds in Queensland that we administer: the Gambling Community Benefit Fund, the Jupiters Casino Community Benefit Fund, the Breakwater Island Casino Community Benefit Fund and the Reef Hotel Casino Community Benefit Fund. These are essentially to make sure that when those who participate in these casinos, pokies and so forth pay their taxes a portion of those taxes goes back into the community. I think these funds are great. We see many community groups who ordinarily would not have access to money having access. You would see that as a local MP.

The Gambling Community Benefit Fund, which was established in 1994, provides grants of up to \$35,000 inclusive of GST. Since its inception the Gambling Community Benefit Fund has approved more than 41,000 applications, with a sum of more than \$544 million going back into our community. So since 1994 there has been \$544 million. The Jupiters Casino Community Benefit Fund was established in 1987. It provides grants of up to \$150,000 inclusive of GST. We have seen more than \$97 million distributed from that fund. The Breakwater Island fund, which was established in 1988, has seen more than \$6 million put out to the community. And the Reef Hotel Casino Community Benefit Fund, since its establishment in 1996, has seen \$7 million sent out.

I as Attorney-General have changed the structure in which people are notified of these grants. I get the recommendations from their independent boards. If I agree, I sign off on the recommendations for the grants. What ordinarily happened was that the department would then send out all the letters to the community groups to the effect, 'You have X amount of dollars.' I have changed the structure so that I approve the amount, I write to each member of parliament prior to going to the media and advise them of the groups in their electorates that will receive money. I want the MPs to phone the community groups to tell them that they have got the money. MPs are continually asked to provide references for these community groups. I remember that, when I was in opposition, I would get the letter from the AG, I would ring the community group and they would say, 'Thanks. We found out about that about five days ago.' I am trying to give leadership back to MPs right across Queensland. MPs will receive letters from me.

A second element I have instigated is the production of a certificate for community groups. To save costs, when I write to the members of parliament I do not provide certificates but, if they wish, members of parliament can contact my office and we will produce a certificate that I will sign. Then I will send it back to the member of parliament so that they can call in their community group and present them with a certificate. I think it creates a better feel of community. MPs can take a leadership role with this, rather than just being the reference for money. They have done the hard work of providing the reference; they should have some involvement when the money is announced. The money will still be distributed from my department, but I think it is good that the member of parliament rings the community group to let them know. I will give members a few days to do that—because if members do not do it we have to let the community groups know anyway—and then we will issue a general press release about who has got the money in the regions.

I think it is great because MPs now can ring my office and say, 'I know that I have four community groups that will receive money. Yes, we would like a certificate.' We send the certificates. Then members can get the community groups into their office, hand over the certificate and get a happy snap.

Mr WATTS: I refer to LIAGs and the support they have received in the past from your office. Will that continue going forward—liquor accords generally being supported—and in what ways?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. I endorse liquor accords. I think some work better than others; it depends on the people you have involved in the liquor accord. But it gets people in a room talking about how they can ensure the industry in their particular region has no problems. As I said, I think generally industry do not want any problems because it reflects badly on their premise or their industry. I certainly support liquor accords. I think liquor accords will have a bigger role to play after the drink safe precincts. As part of the drink safe precincts we will certainly be working with the liquor accords on the role they will play in the future.

Mr WOODFORTH: Attorney, could you advise the committee on the red-tape reduction measures that have been instigated by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland that reduce the cost of doing business in Queensland and maintain the government's focus on having the safest workplaces in Australia?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. The workplace health and safety laws were harmonised by the previous government. Those laws took effect in January this year. On 29 August I held a round table with respect to workplace health and safety in Queensland and the new harmonised laws. I did have particular issues with some of the harmonised law provisions in terms of self-incrimination when one is accused of certain things in a workplace. I remember that the debate of the harmonised laws took place in Mackay, at the regional parliament.

I held the round table on 29 August. Just prior to that, Workplace Health and Safety reduced its forms by about half. So I think we reduced it from about 50 forms to about 26 forms, so that was an immediate red-tape reduction strategy because the harmonised law brought a lot of unnecessary duplication. Queensland did have one of the best workplace health and safety regimes, but the former government harmonised these laws and that has created all sorts of problems. This was highlighted by the fact that at the round table we certainly got an agreement from those around the round table that we ought not sign up to any more United Nation conventions because we do it pretty good in Queensland. We do not need the United Nations to come in over the top of our businesses and our employers across the state. There was also the issue of union right of entrance, and I think we have seen that particularly of late with respect to the Children's Hospital dispute site where the hospital site was locked down for about seven weeks where an agreement could not be reached. I am flying to Melbourne after the committee tonight to talk to the Victorians in relation to the code of practice they have put in place to

ensure that we do not have what has happened on these workplace health and safety sites. The BLF and the CFMEU certainly rode roughshod over the workers in terms of the Children's Hospital site, so much so that there was a seven- to eight-week delay.

One of the issues is that the CFMEU has prepared this sort of precedent letter when its members turn up to a work site and they flash it and they say, 'We're immediately entering the site.' They can shut down the entire work site if they find one little thing wrong such as a pipe out of place. They can shut the entire work site down, which is what we saw—that and many other things—in the circus that was the Children's Hospital site. Under the Fair Work Act, which is Labor Party legislation, union right of entry is with a period of two days notice, but in Queensland we let unions enter work sites at the waving of a piece of paper prepared by the CFMEU. So I think the government has to act on this. The harmonised laws have not been as good as the Labor Party anticipated them to be. I think the best answer to that is that the industry round table which I led, which had about 40 industry leaders from around Queensland around the table, wanted us to probably get rid of about half of the harmonised laws.

Miss BARTON: Attorney, could you perhaps provide the committee with a bit of an update in terms of the educative resources that are available for industry that will help reinforce the government's aim to work with industry in making Queensland workplaces the safest in Australia? For example, I have seen a very moving DVD about Tiffany Ward. I was just wondering if you could give us an update about what else there might be.

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, sure. I thank the member for Broadwater for the question. Obviously we want Queensland to be the safest place for our employees to work, and I think industry wants that as well. To help with this, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland produces resources and tools for employers and workers. These include industry-specific forums and information sessions and news and information alerts through email broadcasts. There are over 22,000 subscribers to social media including Twitter and YouTube and the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website. The website also has an online safety benchmarking tool to help industry assess their own systems and compare their health and safety performance against business of similar sectors and sizes. Employers can also use online services to notify of work related incidents, request inspector assistance, apply for or renew a licence and tour virtual workplaces to identify common hazards and solutions for controlling the risks.

We also have a number of advertising campaigns associated with the Homecomings message. Third-party evaluation for that message showed that employer awareness of workplace health and safety issues increased by at least 10 per cent. In September this year Workplace Health and Safety Queensland launched *In It for the Long Haul: The Tiffany Ward Story*. Tiffany, as the member for Broadwater knows, was an 18-year-old when in October 2008 she was permanently injured. Both of her arms were caught in the potato processing auger while she was cleaning it. The film shows the traumatic impacts on Tiffany financially, physically and emotionally as she struggled to adapt to her new lifestyle and her family commitments after the incident.

In 2012-13 Workplace Health and Safety Queensland will promote Tiffany's story using printed and online resources in both a traditional and viral marketing campaign. Tiffany was a keynote speaker recently at the Work Health and Safety Symposium which launched Safe Work Week 2012 on 2 October. The film was shown to 250 attendees at this event and around 1,500 combined at nine leadership forums being held during the month of October. More short films have been continued to be developed for tradespeople and homeowners. Winners of the Queensland Safe Work Awards and Dive Safety Awards will be announced in a little under two weeks. I say to the member for Broadwater that we are serious about workplace health and safety in Queensland. I thank Tiffany. It has been a struggle for her, but she has helped us produce this DVD where people can learn from the injuries that she sustained and her experiences following the injuries that she sustained.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. I call the member for Nicklin.

Mr WELLINGTON: Minister, I refer you to page 22 of the Service Delivery Statements where reference is made to the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000. You referred to receiving approximately \$1.5 million in administered appropriations each year for the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Claim Fund to provide redress to consumers who suffer financial loss because of licensee contraventions. I ask: how much of this money was actually returned to consolidated revenue, or what percentage, and how much went to the various claimants?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Nicklin for his question. If I can take that on notice for a little while while some people behind me help to find out where the distribution of that was. In relation to the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act, the government will be proceeding to split PAMDA into industry-specific legislation. It was split in the previous parliament. We announced some fundamental reforms during the election that would help reduce red tape for lawyers and sellers and agents and buyers with respect to getting rid of warning statement 30c—that is, getting rid of the stupid declaration that people have to direct people's attention to the thing that said 'warning statement' despite that when they signed it they also had another warning. I have seen and I practised in law at the time that the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act went through that very reactionary process where judges of the Supreme Court were working out what 'attached' meant—did it mean a staple, did it mean a paper clip, a bulldog clip? There were contracts terminating right across Queensland.

The Liberal National Party will not use PAMDA, as has been done in the past by the Labor Party, to be reactionary and seeing dire and unintended consequences. So I can announce to the member for Nicklin that we will split PAMDA. In that split we will deal with the election commitment of getting rid of the ridiculous overburdened red tape—that is, the warning statement form 30c. We have already got rid of the sustainability declarations, so we are actually reducing red tape in this field. I also announce to the member for Nicklin today that we will not only be doing the red-tape reduction we announced in the election. Rather, when we send it off to the parliamentary committee, which I suspect will be your committee, parliament will ask whether with the split of industry-specific legislation you can go out to those individual respective industries and ask them to further reduce these bills by reducing red tape and regulation. So I am intending to introduce the draft bills. We are working out the process of how we do that at the moment, but I am very much keen for the committee to help us reduce red tape and regulation in the real estate industry.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you, Minister, and it would be great if we have sufficient time to do that consultation with Queenslanders and the industry in Queensland. We are certain that you will give us that time. Minister, if I can take you further down page 22. It is headed 'Operational and industry licensing'. I refer to the licensing areas you have just spoken about—real estate agents, motor dealers and security providers. We all know of many examples where in the past there was reference to security providers being linked to illegal activities and some motor dealers simply putting unreasonable pressure on young people to purchase cars when they were not in a proper state to be signing legally binding contracts, and we are all familiar with many examples of real estate agents in the past who simply were doing the wrong thing. So I support you in your endeavours to reduce the red tape, but can we receive an assurance that the fly-by-nighters are not going to be able to come back into the industry—that is, security organisations will meet the highest standards that are required, legal organisations are not going to be able to use it as a sham, car salespeople are going to have to have certain skills and not be able to put unreasonable pressure on young people to sign contracts that they really should not be signing, and I can go on about real estates agents as well?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Nicklin for the question. In the process I have not had any representation, I do not think, to reduce the licensing requirements. I am looking at licensing issues in terms of the security industry and responsible service of alcohol at the moment because last year we saw that Donald Duck received a security licence or a liquor licence. So there are issues that my department has to deal with that we have not got to deal with yet. But I certainly assure the member that I have not the intention at present to devalue the licences or make it easier to get licences and so forth. We will work with the Real Estate Institute of Queensland, but its priority mainly is red-tape reduction for property transactions, and you know that the contract that is used in Queensland is the one produced by the REIQ and the Queensland Law Society generally. There is an ADL contract as well which is in partnership with another law firm and real estate section. So I would not be at this point too concerned, but if there is an issue you want to raise with me in the future, please do so. I am happy to do that.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have just been given some of the information that you probably were requesting. With regard to the Claim Fund that you were asking about, in 2011-12 just over \$1.216 million was paid from the Claim Fund to consumers who had been the victim of dishonest acts by agents and motor dealers. So that has not gone into consolidated revenue; that has gone direct to consumers as my understanding of it, if anyone wants to correct me. What I have here is that that went to consumers who had been the victims of dishonest acts by agents or motor dealers.

Mr WELLINGTON: Is there a simple brochure that the department or that your office has that is available in the community so Queenslanders are aware of what they can claim for?

Mr BLEIJIE: I will check, but I believe that that is the case. In terms of the last time I was on the Department of Justice website looking at Fair Trading when I was looking at selling my own car and looking at what advice we give to people buying or selling their own vehicles, I must say it was a good help. We do have scams and all of that sort of detail on the Fair Trading website. I will check particularly for the Claim Fund, but I assume there is. If not, there should be. As I said, if there is not there should be and we will do it, but I would have to check.

Mr WELLINGTON: It was in relation to the information about the Claim Fund.

Mr BLEIJIE: So I will check the Claim Fund.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney, I refer to the SDS at page 1 and basically your general overall portfolio responsibilities and the different agencies that come under your portfolio. I note that the Premier made an announcement on Tuesday about having this open data revolution. In his opening statement he said that basically everything would be accessible. When I asked him a bit further, he actually clarified that and he said, 'No, cabinet documents would be exempt and'—I think he said—'commercial-in-confidence documents would be exempt.' I was concerned that in his statements there was nothing about if there were criminal investigations afoot or perhaps in your own portfolio if there were particular matters dealing with people's privacy if the matters were before the courts. Would you envisage those matters would also be exempt or not?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. I envisage that matters that ought to be in the public interest remain anonymous, and so they should be. We have to be careful when we are dealing with people's privacy. There are probably elements though that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General would release in this open government. For instance, with regard to liquor licence applications, refusal of liquor licence applications, how many people went to court on X amount of charges and all of that sort of stuff, I would envisage that that would be on the website. Of course, unlike my federal counterpart Attorney-General, I do not discuss matters before the court in the public and to the media. I would expect a similar approach, and I think the Department of Justice and Attorney-General will have to be a little cautious because we do have matters before the court—I have the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and so forth—that we would need to be careful of. But, in saying that, under the RTI legislation or the privacy act the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is able to be RTIed in any event. It is then up to the RTI officer to work out whether it is in the interests of the public to release the information or if it pertains to personal information. So I would imagine that those personal details about people will be maintained as confidential because I think people would expect us to do that. But in terms of all of the other stuff such as court fines and the amount of—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am just a bit concerned. I was listening to Steve Austin this morning and he seems to think that everything is going to be available online except for cabinet documents and, what the Premier said, commercial in confidence. But I would imagine in your portfolio there would a lot of issues. We heard from the CMC chair today. There is the witness protection program. There are surveillance operations. Have you given any advice to the Premier about what areas from your portfolio would be exempt from this open data revolution?

Mr BLEIJIE: We have had discussions but, bearing in mind, this was only announced two days ago and the assistant minister—

Ms PALASZCZUK: But surely it would have been discussed in cabinet and would have been thought about a bit further.

Mr BLEIJIE: I think the assistant minister, having been in the role for only 48 hours, needs a little time to come to see us. I have not seen the assistant minister for open government—Ray Stevens—yet about this, but there is plenty of time. He will come and I will present the appropriation submission.

While we are talking about information publicly available, I note that the former Premier, Anna Bligh, released the details of Campbell Newman's home address during the election campaign. That sort of detail, I suspect, will not be on the government website. I would not want your address to be opened to the world at large, as the former Premier did during the election campaign. So I suspect there will be information that will be kept confidence and we will hold that in a higher regard than the Labor Party ever has.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Have you given any thought as to what types of information from your agency will be made available? Can you give some examples to the committee here today?

Mr BLEIJIE: I just gave two examples: court fines for those appearing before the courts, liquor licence applications and refusals of liquor licence applications. You asked for two examples and that is three examples.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Chair, if you can just indulge me here for a moment, the reason I am pursuing this is that there seems to be this general perception out there that the government is going to release everything. You are the Attorney-General. I would have thought that the first law officer would have had a very keen involvement in making sure that privacy matters were addressed, that these issues would have been consulted. Did you consult anyone at all. Have you conducted with the Chief Justice, the Bar Association, the CMC chair?

Mr BLEIJIE: To be frank, it is not up to the Chief Justice what information the government decides to put out. That would be—

Ms PALASZCZUK: So the government will decide what is going to be put out?

Mr BLEIJIE: You are really asking the Chief Justice to get into the cabinet. Surely, you are not going to say that the Chief Justice should sit in on cabinet meetings from now on.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Not at all. I am just talking about consultation.

Mr BLEIJIE: I think the assistant minister said two days ago that he is now going on a world of consultation—a revolution of consultation. It will happen. I cannot understand the line of questioning, because I thought the opposition would have been supporting open and transparent government. We are going to do things differently from the Labor Party.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, I am supporting it. I just want to know what your boundaries are. Are all of your parliamentary briefs going to be released? Are all of your briefing notes going to be released? Are all of your decision briefs going to be released?

Mr BLEIJIE: You have my diary.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, are your briefs going to be released that you make decisions on?

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, when you ask a question, at least allow the Attorney-General to answer. We have given you a lot of leeway.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Chair.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Mr Chair. I make the point that that is the assistant minister's job—to consult with the ministers. The policy announcement is there. I am not sure whether the opposition leader has taken the time to go on to the New York website yet to see, in fact, what we are talking about here. There are thousands and thousands of pages of information in relation to red light cameras, traffic stops—all of that sort of stuff. It will be all now worked out with the assistant minister. If it had been all worked out prior to this, then there would be no point putting an assistant minister in charge of developing this proposal and getting it out there. So I do not know why we are continuing down this line of questioning where we are questioning open and accountable government. It will be all worked out in time and all the departments will have a say and at all times I will take the Right to Information Act and the Privacy Act into consideration.

Ms PALASZCZUK: And there will be further consultation with you as the first law officer?

Mr BLEIJIE: Can I just say to the member for Inala that I talk to the Leader of the House and the assistant minister all the time and I suspect he will talk to all ministers—not just the first law officer of the state.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It just seems that the policy was an idea but there has not been much consultation about it and we still do not know the depth and breadth of the policy boundaries—of what is going to be released to the public and what is not going to be released. Today, you have added a couple of areas that the Premier did not talk about when he announced this on Tuesday. I think we will find, as the committee hearings extend, more and more examples of areas that perhaps may not be released to the public.

Mr BLEIJIE: And—

Ms PALASZCZUK: And you could not confirm today whether or not your briefing note decisions were going to be released either.

Mr BLEIJIE: And if that is the biggest priority for the opposition in Queensland then I think they have a problem.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am just questioning your policy. We in these estimates are allowed to question the government's policies.

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, and there is an assistant minister established and all the information. If you think that the Premier should have, in his limited three hours or two hours, explained every document that is going to be on the open government website, I would encourage you in the lunchbreak to go and have a look at the New York website, because if you expected our Premier to do what the mayor is doing in New York, then the Premier's estimates committee would still be going now if he detailed every element of what is going to be on the website. I say to the opposition they should get their priorities right.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I just would have thought a bit more policy development would have been done before an announcement was made. I would like to move on to another topic. I refer to page 24 of the 2012-13 SDS and in particular to the closures of some of these courts that have made a huge contribution over the years—the Drug Court, the Special Circumstances Court, and the Murri Court. Could you please explain to the committee the amount that has been budgeted for the increased court costs associated with the closures?

Mr BLEIJIE: The closures save money.

Ms PALASZCZUK: These are diversionary courts. So have you budgeted—

Mr BLEIJIE: The member asked me how much it is going to cost. It is actually an efficient measure and it is actually going to save the Department of Justice and Attorney-General money by closing those programs.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I might follow on from that. I refer to a newspaper article from the *Queensland Times* dated 15 September 2012 titled 'Murri court axed to save millions'. In that article Queensland Law Society president, Dr John de Groot, has said that your calculations on the savings to be made by cuts to these diversionary courts.

... may be based on a false economy and the outcome of the move may end up costing Queenslanders far more than the government's expected savings.

Would you like to comment on that?

Mr BLEIJIE: The member will know that her former government increased court costs last year. The opposition opposed them at the time. In fact, I think we moved a disallowance motion—

Ms PALASZCZUK: We are talking about your closure of courts.

Mr BLEIJIE: The member asked me about costs and also asked me about expenditure. I simply say that the reason the Labor Party said that they increased court costs for every Queensland last year was to fund the Murri Court—an extra \$1 million at the time. We are saving money. We believe in one court system for all Queenslanders. We are going to save money. There will be programs in our Magistrates Court to deal with culturally sensitive matters.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I further quote from that article where the President of the Queensland Law Society said—

Diversionary courts like the Murri, Special Circumstances and the Drug courts play an important role in rehabilitating offenders, reducing the rate of crime and creating considerable long-term cost savings for the community... Dollars aside, this move by the government also raises serious justice issues.

We would agree that there is no quick fix for mental health issues, rehabilitating those with drug dependencies or supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to break out of the cycle of crime. It takes time, perseverance, innovation and political will.

I ask the Attorney-General: what cost analysis of the long-term effect of these cuts has been undertaken? I seek leave to table a copy of that article.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Mr Chair, I do not need a copy of the article.

CHAIR: Leave granted.

Mr BLEIJIE: The closure of these particular programs will save the government money. If the opposition leader wants to talk about the benefit of these—and I know it is a bit touchy because they set up all of those programs so they do not like to see when things do not work and then people with fiscal responsibility and accountability cut programs that do not work—there was a review done two years ago into the Murri Court. Recidivism rates had not changed. So why would we continue to support a program when the reoffending rates had not changed? I am not going to continue to pour money into it. I would rather educate our magistrates to be culturally sensitive and to talk to the elders in terms of sentencing options. There are plenty of elders who wish to do that on a free basis—a pro bono basis—because they believe that it is in the best interests of their communities to do so.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I refer to a draft media release approved on 28 July 2012 titled 'Abolition of the Queensland Drug Court' in which the following statements are attributed to you—

Mr Bleijie said the Drug Court had been a costly and inefficient program, which could not be justified in the current economic climate.

Since 2000, only 400 offenders have graduated from the program.

Each graduate is estimated to have cost the government \$400,000.

That's a significant expense for little return.

I ask the Attorney-General: on what basis did he make those statements and what evidence did he rely on?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. For the figures that I was providing in terms of the preparation of the budget, you work out how much the program cost, you work out how many graduates were in the program, then that tells you how much each person costs. My advice is that each graduate cost \$400,000. So that is what is in the draft press release that the member refers.

Ms PALASZCZUK: This is in stark contrast with the findings in relation to the Drug Court contained in the Magistrates Court of Queensland 2010-11 annual report, which revealed that Queensland saved 588 years of prison time in 2010-11 by diverting 115 people from prison. The President of the Queensland Law Society, John de Groot, pointed out that the savings of the Drug Court alone to taxpayers—

In dollar terms, based on a conservative estimate of the cost of imprisonment of \$200 per day per person, the money saved for taxpayers and the government by the Drug Court is in excess of \$41 million.

I ask the Attorney-General: what analysis of the Drug Court data was undertaken by you or by your department and what consultation with stakeholders was undertaken before the decision was made to cut funding to the Drug Court?

Mr BLEIJIE: The government had to make tough decisions. We had to reprioritise the services offered in all of our courts. One service that I have ceased funding is the Drug Court.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Any consultation?

Mr BLEIJIE: The member was questioning the \$400,000, but then let that go and then said, 'Because it is going to cost "X" amount more to keep these people in prison.' She is making an assumption that these people are going to prison. I do not make those sorts of assumptions. We will have programs in place in our courts. We will want to try to divert people as much as we can from living a life of crime and drugs, but we say to people that they have to take responsibility for their actions.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney-General. The committee might now break for a bite to eat. The hearing will resume at 2.15 with the continued consideration of the proposed expenditure for the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice.

Proceedings suspended from 1.11 pm to 2.16 pm

CHAIR: The estimates hearing of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee is now resumed. We will continue with consideration of the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. The committee welcomes the attendance of the member for Bundamba, Jo Miller, who has joined the committee. I call the member for Yeerongpilly.

Mr JUDGE: Attorney, in relation to workplace health and safety, can you advise the committee on the proactive measures the department is taking to encourage best practice and safe workplaces in Queensland targeting ways to reduce workers' compensation premiums?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Yeerongpilly for the question. It is an important question because the government has recently announced a review into the workers' compensation premium, which I know the Finance and Administration Committee is looking at. In answer to the member for Yeerongpilly's question, can I say that there are approximately 1,000 policies within the Queensland workers' compensation scheme which are currently capped at twice their industry rate due to their poor claims experience. These employers account for less than two per cent in the scheme but represent almost 12 per cent of claims lodged. A high level of claims combined with capping of the premium rates places a burden on the financial sustainability of the scheme, provides an unacceptable outcome for the health and safety of workers and adversely affects the productivity and profitability of these employers. The injury management program is a joint undertaking between Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and WorkCover Queensland. It helps the employers in each industry improve injury prevention, rehabilitation and return to work systems, advises and works with employers for up to 12 months to help them manage health and safety and gets workers back to suitable work faster with the longer term benefit of cutting workers' compensation premiums.

I do not set the premiums. The WorkCover board sets the premiums. I have a veto power which has not obviously been used. I have replaced the board recently. Mr Glenn Ferguson is the new chair of the board. I think they are working quite well with the parliamentary committee to make sure that we have a sustainable scheme in the future, one that provides the best workers' compensation scheme for the employee but also one that comes at an affordable cost to the employer.

CHAIR: I call the member for Toowoomba North.

Mr WATTS: Attorney, with regard to the Electrical Safety Office, can you update the committee on policy changes aimed at revitalising the role of the Electrical Safety Office in Queensland, the Electrical Safety Board and its relationship with the Workplace Health and Safety Board?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Toowoomba North for the question. A number of changes have been made over the past several months to the management structure of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, including the alignment of the Electrical Safety Office and workplace health and safety policy functions. These changes have resulted in enhanced policy development capability and a more cohesive relationship between the Electrical Safety Office and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. The realignment has also resulted in budgetary savings due to the rationalisation of resources.

On 11 September 2012 the Guardianship and Administration and Other Legislation Amendment Bill was introduced into this House. The bill, among others things, seeks to amend the Electrical Safety Act 2002 to align the consultative arrangements of the Electrical Safety Board and the committees with the longstanding model supporting the Workplace Health and Safety Board. Essentially the bill will remove the statutory role of the commissioner from the legislation to be replaced by a new role of chairperson and the standing committee status of the Electrical Safety Education Committee and the Electrical Equipment Committee.

The role and workload of the commissioner has changed since its introduction as a full-time position in 2002. The statutory commissioner role was created to manage the transition into the new electrical safety environment created under the Electrical Safety Act and to facilitate the work of the board and three statutory standing committees. This associated workload initially required the engagement of the commissioner on a full-time basis. This workload has reduced over time and the role has been discharged on a part-time basis since 2007. The chairperson role created by the amendment bill would also be discharged on a part-time as required basis. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland works quite well having a board under Vince O'Rourke. Essentially we have changed the structure to an Electrical Safety Board as is the case with the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland board and it works quite well.

CHAIR: On the same subject, can the Attorney provide an update as to the education campaigns that have been completed in the past year and those that will occur in the coming 12 months.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chair, for the question. This deals with certain things the department is doing in relation to seminars. The Electrical Safety Office presented 61 electrical safety seminars at 36 locations across Queensland during 2011-12. Thirty-nine electrical safety presentations were provided to 552 electrical apprentices right across Queensland. During the 2011-12 year the Electrical Safety Office presented the School Safety Conference to first and fourth year apprentices as they study at their respective TAFE Colleges.

In relation to Safe Work Australia Week, which I described a little earlier today, the ESO participated in Safe Work Australia Week from 23 to 29 October 2011 with electrical safety presentations across the state, including in Townsville, Thursday Island, Maryborough, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Chinchilla, Roma, the Sunshine Coast, Brisbane and the Gold Coast. The Electrical Safety Office is also again participating in the Safe Work Australia Week in 2012. Also we do community events right across Queensland, including the Emergency Services Day and Safe Communities Expo at Rockhampton, the North Queensland Field Days at Townsville, Trades Open Day at the Gold Coast, Farm Fantastic at Caboolture, the electrical and refrigeration event at SkillsTech Centre at Bracken Ridge and the Brisbane Multicultural Festival. We also have an email newsletter, Electrical Safety Outlook, with 33,000 subscribers. It is about making sure industry are aware of changes and particularly best practice.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. I call the member for Yeerongpilly.

Mr JUDGE: Attorney, I take you to births, deaths and marriages. Can the Attorney provide the committee with information on the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and whether there are any particular projects underway to revitalise the core front-line services of this agency?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Yeerongpilly for the question. I am only too pleased to inform the committee of some of the progress that is being made with respect to the valuable work that the registry is undertaking to revitalise and improve front-line services. The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages has the responsibility, of course, for the recording, preservation and protection of life event records for all Queenslanders. The registry has held records of births, deaths and marriages in Queensland since 1829. I recently went on a visit to the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, which is next to the Executive Building. For an historian it is fantastic to look at some of the older records in that building from that period of time. I had someone with me, one of my advisers at the time, and the registry staff had already got out the 1983 register and we saw the birth date and the register of the birth.

We have to realise that it is quite an expense to keep these forms of documents: keeping the binding and the paper from going old and disintegrating. There is a lot of work being put into the new program to digitise the process. This is a major project that Births, Deaths and Marriages is undertaking to make sure that we can have as many as possible digital certificates online. Everything is being scanned and transcribed into a new digital system. They do a great job and I thank the staff at the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

I had a conversation with the Deputy Premier a few weeks ago wherein I was telling him about the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and that they have a chapel there. The Deputy Premier wondered why there were so many brides and grooms hanging around the Executive Building. The chapel is on the corner of the Executive Building but in the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. They have a few celebrants and they conduct weddings in the chapel.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. I call the member for Nudgee.

Mr WOODFORTH: In relation to the Office of Fair Trading, can you please advise the committee on initiatives that the Office of Fair Trading is undertaking to engage young people in consumer protection issues such as the Buy Smart initiative?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you to the member for the question. It is an important question. We want to make sure, as we live in a world of consumer protection, that our young people are learned in the ways of protecting themselves. The member for Nicklin raised an issue before about buying smart and the consumer protection available on the Claim Fund. Just before I get into the matter of the question, for the member for Nicklin's benefit we have gone onto the government website and I have the documentation that is available for people making a claim for that \$10,000. I will table that for the benefit of the member for Nicklin.

CHAIR: Is the committee happy to grant leave? Leave granted.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is not a colourful brochure. It is pretty dry and boring. I think we might be able to make some adjustments to that. The Buy Smart Competition 2012 has been conducted annually since 2002. The competition is designed to increase students' understanding of financial literacy and consumer issues by getting students to research a consumer issue, then develop a way to share their newfound knowledge with their school friends. Students in the past have been highly inventive with their entries, which have included board games, iPhone applications, believe it or not—it never would have happened in my day at school; we would have had few applications for the old typewriters which were on the way out and PCs were coming in—videos and even songs. Last year 656 students entered the competition from 36 schools across Queensland. The 2011 winning entries came from Forest Lake State School, Sheldon College and Palm Beach Currumbin State High School. All Queensland school participants and teachers are encouraged to get their students involved in this competition. We have arranged also for the competition's activities to be mapped to the Australian School Curriculum. This means that teachers can include age appropriate information activities explaining consumer rights and responsibilities as part of their class teaching plans. This ensures a wide distribution of consumer information and advice to this target group.

Miss BARTON: Attorney-General, could you please provide the committee with an update on the cost of scams and travelling con persons for Queensland consumers and how the Office of Fair Trading itself is dealing with this issue, in conjunction with other enforcement agencies?

Mr BLEIJIE: Scams can hit approximately 800,000 Australians each year, at a cost of \$1 billion. About 800,000 Australians fall victim to some sort of scam or another. They are becoming increasingly more sophisticated and we take that threat very seriously. I know the government takes quite seriously the identity fraud issue. It can be a matter of scams through doorknockers selling and offering seemingly great products to vulnerable Queenslanders that, at the time, may seem like a good idea to buy. As members of parliament we have probably all been involved in situations where our constituents, particularly the elderly, have been subjected to these types of scams and we then go into bat for them to try to get their money back.

Not all scams originate from overseas. Increasingly, scams are originating in Australia which is a concern, including many sports betting, investment and dating scams. Many of those operate close to home in South-East Queensland. Also travelling con persons in the form of itinerant bitumen layers, dodgy roof painters, car-boot traders offering cheap and unsafe electrical goods and those targeting remote Indigenous communities are also of significant concern.

Under the Australian consumer law, the Office of Fair Trading has a role to protect consumers in situations where the money is taken without intention or ability to supply, goods and services are misrepresented, goods and services are of poor quality or are not fit for the purpose they are sold, and door-to-door sales, including telemarketing, are not made in accordance with the rules governing unsolicited sales. All Fair Trading jurisdictions and police focus strongly on educating the public and warning consumers about the risks of scams and the travelling con persons. The Office of Fair Trading has available door-to-door sales stickers for members of parliament to send out to people, to try to stop the door-to-door trade salesperson. There is a national approach and a coordinated strategy on itinerant traders involving Fair Trading agencies, police and immigration authorities in place.

During 2011-12, the Office of Fair Trading issued four infringement notices and 17 warnings to traders for door-to-door breaches, including taking payment or supplying goods or services during a cooling-off period and failing to meet disclosure requirements, and initiated one prosecution relating to failure to meet disclosure requirements. I say to consumers in Queensland to be aware. If the Office of Fair Trading can offer any advice or assistance, please contact us, but always be very conscious when someone comes to the door. My message to Queenslanders is pretty simple: if it is an offer or product that seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Mr WELLINGTON: I refer the Attorney-General to his earlier answer to one of the government questions about the review of the workers compensation commission. I note at the moment employers are not able to ask prospective employees about their pre-existing claims history for workers compensation claims, either in Queensland or interstate. There are employers who have employed people, unaware that they had a history of making claims or that they had a pre-existing injury. I ask: in light of this review, will you and the government support the freeing up of the ability of employers to ask that question of prospective employees about their previous claims history?

Two cases come to mind. A farmer employed backpackers and labourers. He went to court, but settled out of court at some ridiculous payment, yet that person had quite a history. The farmer said, 'Peter, I would never have employed him', but he could not ask the question. The second case involved a professional chef who was employed. I will be brief, Mr Chairman. That matter was settled in court by the solicitors for the commission. Quite frankly, the professional chef should have had the skills and experience and should not have had to be trained.

It seems to me there are two issues: will you support the capacity of prospective employers to ask the question? In the investment review, will you look at what I believe is the eagerness of the solicitors for the commission to settle claims, when clearly my constituents are saying these people were frauds, if I can put it that bluntly?

Mr BLEIJIE: It is an inquiry that is subject to a parliamentary inquiry, so I do not want to pre-empt what the recommendations are going to be. Suffice to say, if the committee recommended those sorts of provisions that you are talking about and you are asking would I support it, yes, I would.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you. In your answer to question on notice No. 19, in relation to page 55 of the service delivery statement, you refer to the Legal Aid office being able to undertake a whole range of additional duties. What reserve capacity or spare capacity do you believe the Legal Aid office has? My understanding is that the Legal Aid office is busy at the best of times. In your answer, you say—

LAQ does not provide specialist advice...

...

LAQ will continue to fund its information and referral for tenancy matters from within its general Queensland Government funding.

My concern is this: I do not know how much spare capacity the Legal Aid office has. I believe they are working over and beyond the call of duty at the moment.

Mr BLEIJIE: In my view, I believe there is capacity. However, we do have Anthony Reilly from Legal Aid Queensland here, so I am happy for him to jump in to answer if he wants. If I can make the point, though, that we have some great community legal centres around Queensland that receive LPITAF money. For the benefit of committee members, LPITAF money is interest earned on lawyers trust accounts. Every dollar that is put into a lawyer's trust account is earning interest. The interest does not go to the client or the lawyer; it goes to what they call the LPITAF fund. That funds various things across Queensland. Anthony, you still get LPITAF money at Legal Aid. It funds community legal centres and other bodies such as the Law Society, the Bar Association and the Legal Services Commissioner.

One of the things we have seen is that as the markets have gone down and there has not been as much money in the trust account, which has impacted the capacity for Legal Aid to deliver services, the former government had to really prop up Legal Aid with consolidated revenue to what I understand is 50:50. I believe 50 per cent of funding comes from LPITAF and 50 per cent comes from Consolidated Fund. Anthony Reilly will correct me if I am wrong.

We have announced a review of LPITAF, because we have to make sure we have a sustainable system. Some lawyers now do not have trust accounts. We are kidding ourselves if we think Legal Aid will always get this money and community legal centres will always get this LPITAF money, when it is actually on the decline. If we have a major boost in construction, it is a game changer because obviously the money will be back again. I have announced a review of the LPITAF money. It is not a target of community legal centres, but everyone is on that review panel: Legal Aid, the Law Society, the Bar Association, the Legal Services Commissioner, QAILS which represents community legal centres. I travel around the state. As I said a few weeks ago, I was in the electorate of the member for Inala at the South West Brisbane Legal Community Service. They do a great job down. They have very dodgy premises. It is a couple of old—

Ms PALASZCZUK: They need new premises, Attorney-General.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. They do need new premises. The former government did not give them new premises. I am hoping that we will be able to assist them somehow. They are in old dongers—I think that is what you call them. They are all strung together. However, the people down there are doing a fantastic job. I support those community legal centres that are delivering a front-line service for their communities, which they are.

We are in a bit of a challenge at the moment. I am advised that a couple of years ago the former government did conduct a review of the financial sustainability of LPITAF. I am advised that that document was taken to cabinet and never released. I have written to the cabinet secretary to ask for the document to be released. I have a review on. It is not a complete financial review, but having the information would certainly help. I use this opportunity to ask the opposition leader if the review committee could have that document that was taken to cabinet in terms of financial sustainability of the scheme—

Ms PALASZCZUK: We question you; you do not question us today, I am sorry.

Mr BLEIJIE: If the opposition leader released that document that went to cabinet, we would have a much better understanding—

Ms PALASZCZUK: When you release all your cabinet documents.

CHAIR: Excuse me.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am answering the question of the member for Nicklin. I do not think the opposition leader should be lecturing about releasing any documents from cabinet, because we have not had any documents released by her from cabinet. I make the point to the member for Nicklin that it is a challenge: Legal Aid, LPITAF funding, community legal centres. We are on top of it, though.

Mrs Miller interjected.

CHAIR: Excuse me, today we have had a very good estimates hearing and it is not going to be spoiled now. We will not start interjecting. Let us continue as we have and get through this really well. Attorney-General, thank you.

Mr BLEIJIE: I say to the member for Nicklin, I will hand over to Anthony Reilly to answer the Legal Aid question, but we have a challenge in the future—and I am not hiding behind that fact—to fund Legal Aid and LPITAF and continue that as a sustainable fund.

Mr WELLINGTON: Can you give a brief answer?

Mr Reilly: My apologies, Mr Wellington: could you repeat the question?

Mr WELLINGTON: It was about the reserve capacity of Legal Aid to provide the services and the proposed increased services that will be expected of Legal Aid.

Mr Reilly: In relation to tenancy?

Mr WELLINGTON: Not just tenancy, but the range of services that the government expects Legal Aid to be able to provide.

Mr Reilly: Legal Aid's funding has been stable for some years now and the recent state budget continued the stable nature of our funding. We are able to provide, into the future, the services we are currently providing. They are a whole range of services from information through to representation in courts and tribunals in the various areas of law that the state government requires us to be involved in and the Commonwealth government requires us to be involved in, because our funding comes from the state and Commonwealth governments. We are in a position where we will be continuing to provide the scope and number of services into the future that we are currently providing and we should have no problem doing that. That is a very general answer.

Mr WELLINGTON: That is fine. Attorney-General, I note in the service delivery statement you refer to \$6 million being allocated to establish the Queensland child protection commission of inquiry. Do you have any expectation of how much money may be needed? We do not know what the inquiry's findings will be, but my understanding is that there is bound to be a range of recommendations, everything from the need to employ more staff or to run a whole range of programs. Is it anticipated that money will be available to respond to whatever the recommendations and findings might be?

Mr BLEIJIE: I was just liaising with my acting DG about the costs, which I will get to in a minute—the \$6 million. The inquiry is important. The Carmody inquiry is probably one of the broadest inquiries we have had. I have appointed Tim Carmody as the commissioner of that inquiry and he is doing a great job. We want Queensland to be the safest place to raise a child. There were certain recommendations out of former CMC investigations and the Forde inquiry which did cost a lot of money. I think the state is still paying off a lot. That is not the government's fault; it is just that recommendations are made. It is always a risk when you set up commissions of inquiry as a lot of recommendations are about the finances.

I think people understand that the answer may not necessarily lie just in more money for these issues now. I think there are other issues. I have seen in the commission of inquiry we have had that one in four children are known to the Department of Child Safety. That is staggering. I have three children of my own. If we had another one, statistically one would be known—across the board, statistically—to Child Safety. I think that is a scary statistic for anyone in Queensland. I also think that it is probably wrong, because perhaps we have taken an over-cautious approach to make matters known to Child Safety.

I would not want to guess what the commission is going to come up with in terms of recommendations. One of the terms of reference that I put in was that the commission had to be very conscious of the fact that throwing more money at this is not the answer. There is a particular term of reference which talks about—I cannot recall the exact words—the most efficient way to do things with limited funding. I think the commissioner is very much in tune with that. They have just been out to Aurukun this week looking at the issues out there.

The \$6 million came from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, but when we set-up the commission of the inquiry, and because it is a fairly broad based inquiry, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet contributed an additional \$3 million for legal costs. That is set out on page 70 of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet budget papers. All up, including the legal fees, it is a \$9 million inquiry. It is substantially less than the Floods Commission of Inquiry. I thought I would just let you know because that is the complete figure.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney, a detailed study by the Australian Institute of Criminology found that the number of basic property offences committed by persons who appeared in the Murri Court had dropped by 94 per cent. It also found repeat offending decreased by 17 per cent. I ask the Attorney: what analysis of the Murri Court data was undertaken and what consultation was undertaken with stakeholders before the decision was made to cut funding for the Murri Court?

Mr BLEIJIE: The government does not support separate courts for every individual person in Queensland. We cut the Murri Court, the Drug Court and the other programs as part of efficiency and savings measures. I answered this in quite some detail earlier on in the estimates. The government will not be having the Murri Court. We will make sure there are programs in place to deal with culturally sensitive matters. We are happy for the elders to participate.

In fact, when I was at a law firm the other night with the Prisoner Legal Service I was talking to one of the elders and she was very much in tune with what we are doing by abolishing the Murri Court. She attends the prisons and sees these young people and Indigenous offenders. She is one of the Prisoner Legal Service's volunteers. She said that as long as we have the capacity to talk to our magistrate it will work. I think that is great. I have also talked to the Chief Magistrate about developing programs in the future to make sure that we have magistrates who are properly trained to deal with these sorts of matters.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Have you ever visited the Murri Court?

Mr BLEIJIE: As shadow Attorney-General I visited the Chief Magistrate and there was a Murri Court happening in one of the courtrooms that we poked our head into, yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: How long were you there for?

Mr BLEIJIE: Goodness gracious, that was 12 months ago.

Ms PALASZCZUK: How long?

Mr BLEIJIE: It was 12 months ago.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You poked your head in. Was that for five seconds or 15 seconds?

Mr BLEIJIE: I think it is completely irrelevant.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, I am asking you whether you have visited the Murri Court?

Mr BLEIJIE: I was at the Magistrates Court for about 2½ hours 12 months ago and I have spent many days at the courthouse since.

Ms PALASZCZUK: My next question relates to the special circumstances court. The Magistrates Court annual report also reported that of the 1,668 people referred to the Special Circumstances Court Diversion Program 944 were assessed as eligible—that is, 56 per cent were diverted from prison or traditional court sentences. Given these statistics, I ask the Attorney: what analysis of the special circumstances court data was undertaken and what consultation with stakeholders was undertaken before the decision was made to cut funding to the special circumstances court?

Mr BLEIJIE: The government, as I have explained with the Murri Court, the Drug Court and the special circumstances court, has had to make tougher decisions. We have reprioritised. They are not the government's priority.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have a follow-up question. Have you ever visited the special circumstances court, and I mean not just poked your head in? Have you actually sat there and watched the special circumstance court and the great work that they do?

Mr BLEIJIE: Highly unlikely now because I have abolished it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you have never been there in the past?

Mr BLEIJIE: Highly unlikely now that I have abolished it.

Mrs MILLER: My question is to the acting director-general. I refer to page 1 of the SDS in relation to fair and safe work. I ask the director-general: will you please outline Queensland's historical links to Labour Day and when the Labour Day holiday in May was first gazetted in this state? You find that funny Attorney-General? It is not a mocking laughing matter, Attorney. You should be ashamed of yourself.

Mr Ryan: I will have to take that on notice.

Mrs MILLER: You will have to take that on notice. My next question is to the minister. In relation to page 1 of the SDS, what consultations were undertaken with the mayor of Barcaldine Regional Council, the member for Gregory and other backbenchers and the Barcaldine community before the decision was made to move Labour Day to October?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. This is a great initiative of government to break the holiday periods for Queenslanders so they do not have all their holidays bunched up in the first six months of the year. We are moving the Queen's birthday holiday back to June. We are moving Labour Day, which was celebrated in May this year, to October next year. Queenslanders like it because it means that they will have an additional public holiday in the second half of the year and it breaks up the Easter-Anzac Day period. I have not spoken to the mayor of Barcaldine about it. In terms of the member for Gregory, he is involved in the party room and it went to a party room meeting.

CHAIR: We now go on to government questions. I call the member for Nudgee.

Mr WOODFORTH: My question with regard to policy and law reform is to the Attorney. The government recently increased the value of the penalty unit from \$100 to \$110. Will the Attorney-General please advise how much extra revenue this increase is likely to generate over the next financial year?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you to the member for the question. The government did increase the penalty unit from \$100 to \$110. We will get the figure for you in terms of the estimated additional revenue. It will always depend on the number of fines that are issued and so forth. We estimate that for a full 12-month financial year the increased penalty unit will result in an additional \$22.6 million.

Mr JUDGE: In the same space, what is being done in relation to community concerns with respect to inadequate sentences imposed on child sex offenders?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you member for Yeerongpilly for the question. It is an important question because we are tackling an issue in Queensland that the Labor Party never tackled. I think it is one of the great travesties of the 14 years of power of the former government that it did not tackle this issue. We went to the election with a strong commitment to guard against those who choose to sexually assault our most vulnerable in our community—that is our children.

We have listened to the community outrage about the sufficiency of sentences given to those who sexually offend against children and we have acted. And we acted within a relatively short period of time. I can remember as shadow Attorney-General meeting with the likes of Hetty Johnston of Bravehearts. It does a fantastic job in advocating for the welfare and rights of children and victims in Queensland and the education and support that they give to those young people and their families.

We immediately set about setting up the two-strike policy which means that if someone commits a serious sexual offence against a child—rape, indecent treatment or maintaining a sexual relationship with a child—under the Criminal Code and they are found guilty and then sentenced to a term of imprisonment and they come out and perhaps have not completed any rehabilitation programs and commit those offences again then if they are charged, tried and convicted they will have a mandatory life sentence imposed. It will be mandatory life imprisonment for the second offence which is why we call this the two-strike penalty. It also means that we have increased the non-parole period to 20 years. Not only would the offender get a two-strike penalty they will also have a 20-year non-parole period.

This is the most heinous crime against our young people. I am a father of three and I would dread anything like this happening to my children as a result of these grubs in our community. So I am very pleased that some of the first legislation that we introduced and I had carriage of as Attorney-General of this state was to introduce the two-strike penalty. Bravehearts had called for this for years, but the Labor Party over the previous 14 years did not have the guts to do it. We had the guts to do it. We got on with the job. We are protecting children.

Miss BARTON: I have an overarching question and then a couple of supplementaries. Can you update us on what is being done about the graffiti problem in Queensland?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Broadwater for the question. I am not entirely sure what graffiti problems the member for Broadwater has or if there is a particular issue in Broadwater, but I think it is fair to say that all of us in our respective communities have some form of graffiti or another.

The Liberal National Party election commitment was to make all graffiti offenders remove the graffiti. I can remember a time in parliament when we debated legislation which I think was moved by the shadow Attorney at the time who was Mark McArdle, the member for Caloundra. The Labor Party could not bring itself to support that legislation so they introduced their own legislation, but they took out the mandatory clean-up part which was the whole idea. You would recall the bill, Mr Chair, in your time in this place.

We take these matters seriously. We do not mind telling people that if they choose to paint or graffiti residential or business premises or personal property then they should take full responsibility for it. As part of our Safer Streets Crime Action Plan we have some good policies that will come through the parliament with respect to graffiti offenders.

Miss BARTON: I was wondering if you could enlighten us as to how much money has been invested in the graffiti grants program?

Mr BLEIJIE: The overarching crackdown from the government on graffiti crime includes a graffiti grants program to help local councils with graffiti removal. This is through a \$2 million grant of additional funding each year. We have the graffiti offender clean-up program to assist local councils coordinate with Corrective Services to use offenders on community service orders to clean this up. We have a \$500,000 partnership with Queensland Rail, the Brisbane City Council and the Queensland Police Service for the task force against graffiti. We also have \$1 million per annum in additional funding to renew Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers. The graffiti stop hotline, a dedicated graffiti hotline, will support utilities remove reported graffiti within seven days. This funding is essential, but I think what is more essential is the partnerships we develop with the government sector and the non-government sector, but particularly our Neighbourhood Watch and local Crime Stoppers groups.

Miss BARTON: Would you be able to enlighten us as to whether a task force has been set up to assist with this project? If so, who might be on that task force and how much funding will it provided?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. We are proposing some legislative reforms. We are proposing legislative reforms in terms of the maximum penalty for breaches of section 469 of Criminal Code for a special case of graffiti. We are going to increase that from five to seven years imprisonment. We are introducing a mandatory sentencing regime which will require all graffiti offenders—that is, adult and juvenile offenders—to perform unpaid graffiti removal services under the supervision of an authorised officer. Unpaid graffiti removal and related activities will allow graffiti offenders to give back to their communities and reinforces graffiti as an act of vandalism and against the law. These amendments will be progressed through the Criminal Law Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2012, which I anticipate introducing into the parliament in the sittings commencing 27 November.

Crime Stoppers groups and particularly Neighbourhood Watch groups always deal with these sorts of matters. They are very much in tune and supportive of the government's intention.

Miss BARTON: You mentioned groups like Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers, will there be any additional funding that will be provided to those particular groups?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, there will. We have announced \$1 million per annum in additional funding to renew and revitalise those front-line services being Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers. Occasionally when I can get my local Neighbourhood Watch groups it is the same faces that you see. We need to revitalise them so they can spend some money on trying to attract more people into Neighbourhood Watch groups.

Miss BARTON: I was just wondering whether there are any other projects that the government is looking at to reduce graffiti across Queensland?

Mr BLEIJIE: That really gets back to the graffiti stop hotline. It will be a dedicated graffiti hotline to support utilities remove reported graffiti within seven days. What we are really talking about there is that government owned corporations and organisations like Queensland Rail and Energex have to remove graffiti within the seven days.

There is a program in America that the former mayor of New York Rudy Giuliani used called the broken windows theory. It is a theory that some say works and some say does not work. It worked over there. Imagine a building of unit complexes in a residential estate and for some reason people have moved out and it is empty or vacated. If someone comes along and smashes one of the windows or throws a ball or a rock through one of the windows, if you do not fix it immediately then what happens the next day and the day after is that more windows get smashed. So it is called the broken window theory. If a community does not fix the problem there—that is, the one window—then it is likely that it is going to progress and more windows will be broken and then you end up with the place totally trashed.

CHAIR: I call the member for Ipswich West.

Mr CHOAT: Just a moment ago the member for Nicklin raised questions with regard to Legal Aid Queensland. Could the Attorney outline for us how LAQ are delivering quality legal services across Queensland, particularly for those who can least afford to get their own?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. Legal Aid Queensland provides a vital service to Queenslanders, particularly the legal aid that they provide to vulnerable Queenslanders and Queenslanders who cannot afford lawyers. I recently had the pleasure of heading to Cairns to open the new legal aid centre up there. The staff were very appreciative because during the election campaign I also visited their old premises, which was quite an eyesore. They are very much happy with their new premises.

Legal Aid essentially is an independent statutory body that provides front-line legal help to financially disadvantaged people across Queensland. I will go through some of their achievements in 2011-12, if I can be so bold. During 2011-12 Legal Aid Queensland provided a range of front-line services including preventative legal services including legal education, information—via telephone, face to face and web access—and referrals on more than 1.5 million occasions. They provided 53,500 early intervention legal advice; over 1.5 million preventative legal services, such as community legal education, information and referral; 67,000 criminal law duty lawyer services to children and adults in the Magistrates and Children's Court; 1,989 family law duty lawyer services; approval of over 27,000 grants of aid for lawyers to represent people in criminal law, family law, child protection, domestic violence and other matters; \$57.8 million in expenditure to private law firms—that is when the private sector do the legal aid work and we fund them to do that; it is obviously at a more reduced rate than what they would ordinarily get, but it is \$57.8 million; and free legal assistance to people to challenge adverse insurance decisions arising from the 2011 floods and cyclones. I pay tribute to Legal Aid staff and Anthony Reilly for how during those disasters Legal Aid really stepped in. In fact I remember visiting one of the legal aid or community legal centres where they had dedicated lawyers to really help people get through the insurance claims and any other legal matters they may have had.

The key achievements include a 30 per cent increase in legal information and referral services, a 5.3 per cent increase in advice and minor assistance, a 4.2 per cent increase in criminal law duty lawyer services, 661 additional grants of aid and \$1.6 million of increased investment in private law firms. I think Legal Aid is doing a tremendous job. As I said to the member for Nicklin before, we have some challenges with respect to funding. It is funded this year of course, but with the money they get from LPITAF we have to make sure that we have a sustainable fund in the future and that is what the LPITAF review is about at the moment.

CHAIR: I call the member for Toowoomba North.

Mr WATTS: Just sticking with Legal Aid Queensland, you previously mentioned the office in Cairns. I am particularly interested in how we ensure that we are delivering quality legal services in regional Queensland?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Toowoomba North. It is particularly important for you being in regional Queensland that you have access to these sorts of services. Legal Aid Queensland is committed to revitalising front-line legal services to rural, regional and remote areas of Queensland. We have three regional offices providing services to regional Queensland and a state-wide network of regional preferred supplier private law firms that contribute to the strengthening of Queensland's justice system. Legal Aid Queensland provides direct legal services such as grants of aid, legal advice and duty lawyer services to Queensland families in rural, regional and remote Queensland.

During 2011-12 I think it is important to note that 57 per cent of Legal Aid Queensland's legal advice and representation services were delivered to clients from non-metropolitan areas. So Legal Aid did most of its work by far, 57 per cent, in non-metropolitan areas. I have already discussed the new office in Cairns. We have appearance of in-house counsel in regional and remote circuits in Mount Isa, the Gulf of Carpentaria, Thursday Island, Cape York Peninsula, Mackay, Hervey Bay, Gympie,

Bundaberg, Kingaroy and Maryborough and legal outreach clinics from Legal Aid Queensland offices at Caboolture, Cairns, Toowoomba and Townsville, where lawyers travel the surrounding regions or link by videoconferencing to provide legal advice services.

In conclusion, Legal Aid Queensland understand the importance of delivering quality legal services to non-metropolitan areas, reflected by the fact that 57 per cent of the work is in non-metropolitan areas.

CHAIR: We will now go to non-government questions. I call the member for Bundamba.

Mrs MILLER: My question is to the Acting Director-General. Mr Ryan, I refer to page 1 of the SDS. What consultation was the department asked to undertake before deciding to toss out more than 100 years of tradition in relation to Labour Day, given that when the previous government was in power in terms of moving the Queen's birthday holiday to October a discussion paper was released and there was an online survey with 24,000 responses—85 per cent of which were in favour of moving the Queen's birthday holiday to October? Was there a discussion paper prepared? Was there an online survey prepared? If so, were there any responses or was there simply no consultation asked for to be undertaken at all?

Mr Ryan: I am not aware of any consultation that was undertaken in relation to that proposal.

Mrs MILLER: Minister, what consultation did you undertake with the unions or with any business organisations? Did you have any discussion papers drafted in your own office? Did you consult with any councils across Queensland in relation to moving Labour Day to October?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Bundamba for the question. The former government did a fairly extensive consultation paper. I read the consultation paper and I was convinced that it was in the best interests of Queensland to move Labour Day to October and the Queen's birthday holiday to back to June.

Mrs MILLER: Mr Chair, I have a couple of follow-up questions. Attorney, you are obviously sniggering. You think this is quite funny. So without any consultation with anybody you decided yourself that you would move Labour Day to October. Therefore you moved this on an ideological belief rather than going out to the people of Queensland to seek their views on this.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, apart from the verballing in the question, no, I did not make the decision. It went to cabinet. It went to the party room and guess what? Parliament will decide if Labour Day will change because parliament will vote on the bill that is currently before the House. So the ultimate supreme is parliament. It is the ultimate decision maker and I look forward to the debate in parliament when we have it.

Mrs MILLER: Mr Chair, I have a follow-up question. Attorney, is it not true that in your submission to the cabinet you recommended that Labour Day be moved to October and that legislation be prepared to move Labour Day to October?

Mr BLEIJIE: If I could ask the member for Bundamba to consult the honourable woman to her side, the opposition leader, who has served in cabinet and would understand that I am not going to discuss what did or did not happen in preparation or, indeed, in cabinet.

Mrs MILLER: So there was no consultation at all. You have just confirmed that.

Mr BLEIJIE: No. I reject that entirely. What I said to you was that I am not going to disclose cabinet-in-confidence discussions.

Mrs MILLER: So you are not going to disclose for the benefit of millions of people in Queensland that enjoy Labour Day in May whether or not you even took a submission to cabinet.

Mr BLEIJIE: I can say to the honourable member's constituents that she represents that if they wish to march on Labour Day they can march in October next year.

Mrs MILLER: So you are refusing to answer the question that I have asked you at this estimates committee.

Mr BLEIJIE: I reiterate the comments that you made, Mr Chair, that this committee was working so well until the member for Bundamba arrived in the last half an hour.

Mrs MILLER: I have a follow-up question to the Acting Director-General. Mr Ryan, I refer to page 1 of the SDS. Mr Ryan, were you asked by the Attorney-General to draft a cabinet submission on behalf of the Attorney to the Queensland cabinet without any consultation, which the minister has just admitted and you have admitted, to move Labour Day to October this year?

Mr Ryan: I think I need to defer to the Attorney-General in relation to any disclosure of cabinet discussions.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Acting Director-General. I refer to my previous comments. I have been over this. Labour Day will be moved to October next year in the interests of Queenslanders who want a public holiday in the second half of the year and not have such built-up public holidays in April with Anzac Day and Labour Day, which is currently held in May. Come next year, depending on parliament's decision, it will be in October.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Chair, just for the clarification of the committee, the Attorney said previously that he could not visit the Special Circumstances Court because it was abolished. I just want to advise the Attorney that it is indeed sitting today. You could go and view it this afternoon.

CHAIR: Excuse me. We probably will ask questions and not make statements.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I was just clarifying. Sorry, Chair. Acting Director-General, I refer to 'Fair and Safe Work' on page 1 of the SDS in relation to workplace health and safety. How important is education and training to Queensland's workplace health and safety regime so that workers, managers and owners are aware of their rights and responsibilities in this area?

Mr Ryan: I think that is asking me to give an opinion on a particular matter. I am not sure that I am able to do that.

CHAIR: Could you repeat the question please, Leader of the Opposition?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sure. It was in relation to workplace health and safety laws. How important is education and training to Queensland's workplace health and safety regime so that workers, managers and owners are aware of their rights and responsibilities in this area? I do not believe it is asking for an opinion.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is a policy area; ask me.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will get to you next.

Mr BLEIJIE: Feel free.

Mr Ryan: I think those activities are an important component of the work of the fair and safe work Queensland division of the department.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Do you know how much money is spent each year in relation to that?

Mr Ryan: I do not have that—

Ms PALASZCZUK: It looks like it has arrived.

Mr Ryan: It might be helpful if Simon Blackwood, who chairs that area, could answer that.

Mr Blackwood: Could you clarify what the question was again?

Ms PALASZCZUK: In relation to workplace health and safety, I wanted to know how much the department spends on educating not just workers but managers and owners about their rights and obligations under the law.

Mr Blackwood: The workplace health and safety budget is approximately \$70 million. Of that a considerable sum is put towards health and safety education. In terms of trying to break it down, I suppose I should explain that our activities as a regulator, including our inspectors, is always focused every day that we are out in the field on ensuring compliance and that will be directed to educating employers on a regular basis about what they need to do to comply with the laws. Obviously all of our activities are focused on improving people's understanding of the laws, how they need to comply and what they need to do to ensure compliance.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So it is an important role?

Mr Blackwood: Yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney, I notice in your answer to question on notice No. 12, at attachment A, that three bodies have had their funding terminated. Is that the total number of organisations that receive funding for workplace health and safety, training and education? Are there any other organisations that receive funding like Commerce Queensland or anybody else?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. Under that particular grant process, my understanding—Simon, correct me if I am wrong—is that those three groups which I abolished, which was Farmsafe, the unions and the working women's group—

Ms PALASZCZUK: So that is the total?

Mr BLEIJIE: I believe that is the total of those three bodies.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No-one else was receiving any other funding?

Mr BLEIJIE: No.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is the total.

Mr BLEIJIE: There are provisions in Workplace Health and Safety Queensland that provide those services, and that is where it should be at, not us providing money for those other three bodies.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Minister, what consultation was undertaken with the Queensland Working Women's Service, the Queensland Council of Unions and Farmsafe Queensland before you terminated their funding?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, can I deal with this issue about consultation and abolishing certain bodies? I have abolished many bodies in this department

Ms PALASZCZUK: We are well aware of that.

Mr BLEIJIE: I know you are. I abolished the Sentencing Advisory Council within the first few weeks of coming into government.

Mrs MILLER: Shame.

Mr BLEIJIE: If we consult with these people, what does the honourable Leader of the Opposition believe—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sorry, consult with ‘these people’?

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, I have asked you a number of times today when you ask a question to allow the Attorney to answer it. I do not want to warn you. We have had a very good day. Let us keep it that way. We have half an hour to go. Attorney, could you finish the answer, please?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chair. If we consulted with these bodies, I suspect the people in those bodies would say, ‘Don’t abolish us.’ We are making tough decisions. We have acknowledged that. I am not going to apologise for abolishing these bodies which we believe have been duplicated or delivering waste and inefficiencies or not delivering a good service. They will be abolished and that will save the government many millions of dollars.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Minister, what did the Queensland Working Women’s Service do?

Mr BLEIJIE: The three grants that the opposition leader is referring to dealt with—I think particularly the Queensland Working Women’s Service was federal in nature. My understanding was it dealt with matters that could be dealt with at the federal level. Most industrial relations now are in the federal system. I guess from my point of view it does not really matter to me what they do or do not do, because I have abolished the funding. So they can continue to do what they want to do, but they are not going to do it with state government money and taxpayers’ money.

Ms PALASZCZUK: My point, Minister, is that you seem to be abolishing services when you do not have any idea at all about what their job actually entailed or what the money was provided for. We have been examining this at length today. We have gone through the Special Circumstances Court, the Drug Court and the Murri Court. We have analysed that you have hardly had an opportunity to visit these places. You haven’t really spoken to these people. After being the minister for a mere six months, you do not seem to have any comprehension—

CHAIR: Could we get to real question, Leader of the Opposition, instead of accusing the minister of what he does and does not know?

Ms PALASZCZUK:—about the roles and responsibilities of what these grants actually do.

CHAIR: Excuse me, if you could just ask the question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chair. I will tell the honourable opposition leader one thing I and this government know about: fiscal responsibility, accountability and integrity. We know that there is \$65 billion of debt. If we did not do what we are doing to a lot of these programs across all departments—not just Justice and Attorney-General—then we would be in the same boat now borrowing, begging and stealing to pay public servants. We are wanting to get out of that space and get Queensland back on track. The only way we can do it is to look across all our departments and make savings and get rid of waste and inefficiency. We are not going to apologise for doing it.

CHAIR: Attorney, at this stage would you like to respond to any additional questions taken on notice?

Mr BLEIJIE: I think we will get back to you on those questions on notice. I have tabled most things as I have gone along. I think we have 24 hours or until Monday.

CHAIR: Yes, it is not a problem. I just wanted to give you that opportunity.

Mr JUDGE: Attorney, could you please advise what steps Legal Aid Queensland has taken to improve its process relating to the imposition on clients’ contributions?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Yeerongpilly. This is an issue that I raised at the hearing last year. I had a constituent who came to see me who had Legal Aid assistance. Legal Aid took a mortgage on the property but they were having difficulties finding out how much money they owed to Legal Aid, whether it was \$10,000 or \$1,000. They were finding it increasingly difficult. I raised the issue at estimates this time last year as shadow Attorney-General, and I note that Anthony Reilly, who is the CEO of Legal Aid and who is with us today still, committed to go away and look at that. I am pleased to say that the matter has now been fixed.

Legal Aid undertook to improve its processes, which it has done. The first thing that Legal Aid did was to write to all clients who were subject to a mortgage contribution to advise them of the amount owed to Legal Aid Queensland under the mortgage. I think that was great, because there are a lot of

mortgages out there for legal services and people did not know how much was owed. So Legal Aid wrote to them with an amount. Legal Aid then changed its processes around these mortgages to ensure that clients who engaged to accept the condition to contribute to the costs of their legal assistance are kept informed on an ongoing basis about their level of debt.

The process now involves sending a standard letter with the mortgage documents to the client which advises them to seek independent legal advice before signing the mortgage documents. We then regularly advise the client of the costs incurred as their legal matter progresses. When the legal proceedings are over, LAQ calculates the total contribution amount for the legal matter and a tax invoice is issued and is sent to the client and the representing lawyer. Once the legal proceedings are complete, the debt is managed by LAQ's debt management unit. The debts incurred by the clients for these contributions do not attract interest and LAQ does not usually seek to recover against the debts until the sale or transfer of the properties. Clients can also choose to make periodic payments to reduce their debt at any time. I am pleased with the client communication and the process improvements from LAQ since I raised it at these estimates last year.

CHAIR: For the sake of the committee, the staff and members here, under standing order 183 the Attorney has 48 hours to get back to us on any questions on notice. So that will be Monday afternoon—two working days.

Mr JUDGE: Attorney, with regard to Legal Aid Queensland, could you outline how changes to LAQ guidelines have resulted in an increase in the overall number of grants of legal aid?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Yeerongpilly for the question. Legal Aid Queensland, as I have said, is dedicated to providing quality representation to its clients and quality assistance to our courts. In October 2011 LAQ introduced changes to its guidelines for summary pleas of guilty that resulted in an average of 189 additional grants of aid being approved each month. This amounts to an annual increase of over 40 per cent for these grants of aid. Prior to October 2011, LAQ's previous guidelines for summary pleas of guilt provided that a grant of aid could only be made to a financially eligible defendant if the defendant faced a high risk of being sentenced to a lengthy term of imprisonment of at least six months, the matter was too complex for the duty lawyer to deal with because additional information was required, or the defendant had limited ability to provide instructions to the duty lawyer because of the disability or disadvantage.

Members of the legal profession had expressed concern about the operation of these previous guidelines, suggesting they were too strict. I commend Legal Aid Queensland for taking action to address concerns raised in the summary plea guidelines. It balances the goals of access to justice and financial sustainability. It is also important to note that LAQ funds criminal law duty lawyer services in the Magistrates Court and Children's Court in 69 locations across Queensland. The duty lawyer service aims to ensure that people appearing in court after being charged with a criminal offence have access to independent legal advice and representation. This service is available free of charge. I am pleased that LAQ's expanded guidelines for summary pleas of guilty in its criminal law duty lawyer services are enhancing access to justice for financially disadvantaged Queenslanders across the state.

Mr WOODFORTH: Would the Attorney-General outline how Legal Aid Queensland has responded to domestic and family violence legislation reform?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Nudgee for his interest in this issue. Helping people affected by domestic violence, particularly vulnerable women and children, is a priority for Legal Aid Queensland. Following the introduction of the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Act 2012, LAQ has recently introduced a number of initiatives that revitalised its front-line domestic violence services. LAQ changed its guidelines for grants of aid for domestic violence matters to reflect the change in the law. As part of the review of grants of aid, LAQ increased its fees for lawyers doing this work by 10 per cent from \$95 an hour to \$105 an hour. This fee increase is expected to cost LAQ an additional \$100,000 to \$200,000 per year in fees for these types of matters.

The LAQ also updated its legal information resources for domestic and family violence including a comprehensive guide on how to apply for a protection order and its best practice guidelines for professionals working with people who have experienced domestic violence. LAQ provides people affected by domestic violence a state-wide network of experienced family lawyers who provide quality legal services to assist people experiencing domestic violence, including a specialist response from its state-wide call centre that prioritises calls from people experiencing domestic violence who are considered to be at risk of harm. LAQ plays an important role in helping people experiencing domestic violence from its free call centre, providing information and support to women suffering domestic violence and abuse.

Miss BARTON: If you do not mind, Attorney, we might go slightly off topic. I want to ask you about the Women's Legal Service. My understanding is that there has been some increased funding for the Women's Legal Service. I wonder whether you might be able to explain that in greater detail for me and the committee.

Mr BLEIJIE: Sure. During the election campaign I met with the director and CEO of the Women's Legal Service, which is based in the member for South Brisbane's electorate. They raised the issue that they were severely underfunded by the Labor Party at the time, because we were not in government, we were in opposition. They started a campaign to try to get the Labor government of the Commonwealth, the Labor government of the state and the private sector interested. Suffice to say the former Labor government of the state was not interested in these types of issues. It refused to fund them. They were underfunded.

The Premier took a particular interest when I raised this issue with him. We went out and visited the Women's Legal Service. We were told on the day we were there that the night before seven women were turned away from the service because they did not have the people there to look after them. We also got told that, because of the Labor Party underfunding, they had to cancel their rural phone line. I cannot recall where it was, but it was either central or North Queensland that I was in one of the women's centres—

Mrs MILLER: Mr Chair, I raise a point of order.

CHAIR: What is your point of order?

Mrs MILLER: My point of order is that the Attorney-General is misleading this committee. The Labor Party does not fund any legal service and never has. It is the former Labor government.

CHAIR: Continue please, Attorney.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chair. To the member for Broadwater, the Labor Party members that made up the former incompetent Labor Party government led by Anna Bligh and Andrew Fraser, of which the member for Bundamba and Inala were members—

Mrs MILLER: Proud members of the Labor government.

Mr BLEIJIE: Proud members of an incompetent Labor government; I take the point.

Mrs MILLER: No, Labor government, not incompetent; you are.

Mr BLEIJIE: We are proud to associate ourselves with the Women's Legal Service. We contributed and announced \$750,000 additional money to the Women's Legal Services. I was at Gadens Lawyers when the Premier made the announcement and we made the cheque presentation. Gadens Lawyers also contributed \$75,000 over three years. So the private sector came on board. The Liberal National government came on board. The Labor Party never did. I think it is a crying shame that the former minister for women, Karen Struthers, said at the time when I said that we would give \$750,000 that it was hush money to women suffering at the hands of domestic violence. I was ashamed that those comments were made by a minister of the Crown then, as I am still ashamed of those comments. But I am very proud to be part of a government that has given \$750,000 to the Women's Legal Service.

Miss BARTON: Attorney-General, you mentioned that the Women's Legal Service helps women with regard to domestic violence orders and other legal matters arising from domestic violence problems. I was wondering if you could provide some further information on other matters where the Women's Legal Service helps women across Queensland.

Mr BLEIJIE: Sure. One of the fundamental aspects of the Women's Legal Service was the rural phone line, but because of the underfunding of the former government they could not contribute anymore. Prior to being rudely interrupted, I was going to say that I was talking to one of the women's centres up in Central and North Queensland and they were saying that, even though the group are here, they have noticed that the rural phone line being shut down is impacting on their clients right across Queensland. So one of the elements of the funding arrangement was that the women's phone line should be reopened. I am pleased to say that I have received a letter from the Women's Legal Service saying that, because of the additional funding from the Liberal-National government, they are now able to reinstate their rural phone line. This will help women right across Queensland, particularly in rural and regional areas.

Miss BARTON: Thank you very much. Attorney, how will this particular funding help in terms of increased legal support, specifically within their main office, for women across Brisbane and the south-east region?

Mr BLEIJIE: Can I pay tribute to the volunteers at the Women's Legal Service and other community legal centres across Queensland. What this will effectively mean is that the seven women who were turned away the day the Premier and I visited will not necessarily be turned away. They will have people there to access this fundamental service. The Women's Legal Service have done a fantastic job in revitalising their service, upgrading the premises where they are based in Annerley and making sure they have an open-door policy. In fact, it will also allow them to reopen on one of the days where they have had to shut their particular service down.

Miss BARTON: Attorney, you referred to the restarting of the rural help line and those unfortunate seven women who had to be turned away. Could you expand further on how many other operations might be continued or expanded under this increased funding?

Mr BLEIJIE: I think what it does is it starts a process. We have given \$750,000 and the Gadens Lawyers have given \$75,000. The Commonwealth government, from my understanding, have not come to the party, or if they did it was even less than the private sector has given. I think the Commonwealth may have just recently contributed \$50,000 out of the \$750,000 requested by the Women's Legal Service.

It will have other benefits, but it will also have an emotional benefit to the women who go into this place and to the women who work in this place. They do an amazing job with limited availability and limited resources. Most of them are volunteers. Rachael Field is the president and she is a QUT law lecturer. We also have Rosslyn Monro as the CEO or the go-to person of that organisation. I can remember delivering the news to them that we were going to fund on one condition—that we won the election. I think I was sitting in Mackay Airport waiting for my plane, and I rang both Rosslyn and Rachael and gave them the news that we were giving \$750,000 on one condition—that we won the election. They were ecstatic and they thought of the women it would help and they thought of the better services and the increased services they could put back online to really help women across Queensland.

Miss BARTON: Thank you, Mr Attorney.

CHAIR: I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney, I refer to page 18 of the SDS. Given the 98 per cent satisfaction rate for youth justice conferencing participants, what consultation was undertaken with stakeholders before the decision was made to cease court referred youth justice conferencing?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. Yes, I have ceased court conferencing. I can get the figure that we will save from the government in a second. Our youth justice centres will continue to operate. I have recently been to the one at Mermaid Waters. Police conferencing will continue, but at the end of the day the consultation that I had was with Queenslanders and Queenslanders did not particularly like the fact that the offender had the opportunity to sit in with the victim and try to sort it all out. We will always stick up for the victim's rights above and beyond the offender's rights—that is the philosophy of this government. I think we have clearly seen that by the additional \$2 million that we are giving to victim support groups across Queensland.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney, there was a 98 per cent satisfaction rate with the service. That is one of the highest SDS measures that I can recall. I am just pointing that out.

I have a subsequent question. I want to refer to question on notice No. 9 in relation to your youth boot camp diversion program. I notice the answer seems to be a bit more comprehensive than what you have been elaborating on to the parliament and to the rest of Queensland. Can you please explain the program—and I know we touched on it earlier today—where part of the component is a 10-day boot camp but then there appears to be a section dealing with counselling, having mentors and support services? Can you outline a bit more about that particular section of the boot camp?

Mr BLEIJIE: Sure. Thank you for the question. One of the realities of these boot camps is that we are changing what we have done wrong in Queensland in terms of youth justice. We have run it purely with the department of communities and not talked to anyone else about it. One of the fundamental things I have done is change youth justice to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. What we then have to do is fix one of the problems we have got, which is when kids come out of detention centres and there is no mentoring and no follow-up and most of the time they go back to the environment from which they came—either to an abusive parent or community member or to the juvenile gang they have come from.

For the early intervention program at the Gold Coast with the 10-day camp, we had a roundtable in parliament and I have another one scheduled. We had the Department of the Premier and Cabinet represented, we had Queensland Health represented, we had the department of education represented, we had the department of communities represented and we had the Department of Justice and Attorney-General represented. I have been told that it was the first time all of those departments sat around and talked about youth justice. Not only that, many community groups and youth justice groups right across Queensland were represented as well.

The commitment I gave to those people was that this policy of youth boot camps will be developed in consultation with that roundtable that I held a few months ago in parliament. We had the District Court judge and Children's Court magistrate who attended the roundtable as well. So a lot of what we see in the boot camp proposal—with the follow-up and the whole-of-family approach and the whole-of-government approach—in fact came out of conversations we had with the stakeholders.

What we then did is we had the stakeholder roundtable and we went away and the department worked up the policy. We soon came to the realisation that one boot camp was not going to fit everyone and that we needed two. We needed an early intervention boot camp and a more hard-line boot camp for the more progressive criminals or the young people who have been embedded into the college of crime a little more. So that is why we have the two boot camps.

We then produced procurement documents, and they have been out in the community. I am pleased to say that we have had over 10 expressions of interest, so people have sat down and actually completed all of the procurement documents. Those people who know procurement documents know that they are not the easiest documents with government, but we have had over 10 procurement documents at each location for people wanting to run these boot camps. I have now written to everyone who was on the original stakeholder roundtable group and we are planning to have another roundtable at parliament to tie it altogether and then announce the successful bid by the end of the year. Those bids are all in now and the department is going through them at the moment to see what people are representing to us and then we will start them in January next year.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney, I put it to you, from what you have said today, that it sounds more like these programs are youth intervention programs and they are merely boot camp in name only.

Mr BLEIJIE: Well, no, they are going to a camp and it is going to have discipline and they will learn respect, but it is also going to have a whole-of-government approach and a whole-of-family approach. Their family members will be involved. I find it odd that the opposition leader would be attacking something which is so widely supported across Queensland.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am not attacking it. I am suggesting to you that it is in name only—that it is tough talk.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chairman, if the Labor Party had all the answers to juvenile justice, why do we have 30 per cent of young people serving five times or more in our detention centres?

Ms PALASZCZUK: And why did we have 98 per cent satisfaction with youth justice conferencing before you axed it?

Mr BLEIJIE: Well, it obviously ain't working because we have got such a high reoffending rate of young people. Mr Chair, this is the problem with the Labor Party. The Labor Party set all these programs up and they did not work, but they just continued them for the sake of continuing them because they did not have the guts to stand up and say they did not work. We do. We will cancel the programs—

Ms PALASZCZUK: With no consultation.

Mr BLEIJIE: We will cancel the projects and we will set up—

Mrs Miller interjected.

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, we have got four minutes to go.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That was not me, Chair. That was the member for Bundamba.

CHAIR: You have been very good all day. Do not do it now.

Mrs MILLER: Mr Chair, can I just say that it was me.

CHAIR: Excuse me, the Attorney has not finished the question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chair. This is positive for Queensland. This is trying to do something different. I know that the boot camps have attracted the ire of all sorts of civil libertarians right across Queensland. I say to those people that you have had the ear of the Labor Party for 14 years but obviously your approach to these sorts of juvenile justice issues did not work.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney.

Mrs MILLER: Chair, I have a question for the minister. Minister, is there such a thing as boot camps for Attorneys-General, or would you like to personally go on a boot camp to—

CHAIR: I rule that question out of order immediately. We are nearly at the end of the time for our hearing. We will have one more question. I call the Leader of the Opposition or the member for Bundamba.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am finished.

Mrs MILLER: That was my question. In relation to SDS page 1, Attorney-General, are you prepared to personally go on one of these boot camps for 10 days and then report back to the estimates committee or the parliament in relation to what you would agree would be the success or failures of any of these boot camps that you so proudly espouse today?

Mr BLEIJIE: The boot camp is a two-year trial. If the member had been here earlier, she would have heard how I have been out with Victoria Cross winner Keith Payne to the Kokoda Track in the area of Beaudesert where they are setting up a boot camp.

Mrs MILLER: No, a 10-day boot camp.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, she has asked the question and I am answering it. I would love to participate in a boot camp once we get it established, but let us get it established first. Let all parliamentarians go. I challenge members of the Labor Party to go on the boot camp. I suspect they would not be able to complete probably two out of the 10 days, although perhaps I could challenge the member for Bundamba to not go to the 10-day boot camp but to go to the three-month boot camp in Cairns.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney-General. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you. The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisation units within the portfolio of Attorney-General and Minister for Justice has expired. On behalf of the committee, Attorney, I thank you and your advisers for your attendance. I remind you that your answers to questions taken on notice at today's hearing are to be provided to the research director by 5 pm on Monday, 15 October. The committee will now break for smoko.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Proceedings suspended from 3.42 pm to 4.00 pm

ESTIMATES—LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE— POLICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

In Attendance

Hon. JM Dempsey, Minister for Police and Community Safety

Queensland Police Service

Mr B Atkinson, Commissioner of Police

Mr I Stewart, Deputy Commissioner (Regional Operations)

Mr R Barnett, Deputy Commissioner (Specialist Operations)

Mr P Brown, Deputy Chief Executive (Resource Management)

Mr A MacCracken, Team Leader, Corporate Reporting Functions, Strategic Planning and Reporting, Office of the Commissioner

Department of Community Safety

Mr K Anderson, Director-General


Ms M Morison, Commissioner, Queensland Corrective Services

Mr R Bowles, Commissioner, Queensland Ambulance Service

Mr L Johnson, Commissioner, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service

Mr B Grady, Assistant Director-General, Emergency Management Queensland

Ms F Burbidge, Chief Financial Officer (Acting)

 **CHAIR:** Thank you very much. The hearing is now resumed. On behalf of the committee I welcome the Minister for Police and Community Safety, advisers and members of the public to the hearing. The committee will now consider the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the Police portfolio of the Minister for Police and Community Safety. I remind all those participating in the hearing today that these proceedings are similar to parliament to the extent that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. In this regard I remind members of the public that under the standing orders the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee. I ask that all mobile phones and pagers be either switched off or switched to silent mode. I remind members that the standing orders provide that directors-general and chief executive officers as set out in schedule 7 of the standing orders may be questioned by the committee.

The committee welcomes the attendance of Jo-Ann Miller, the member for Bundamba, who has joined the committee for the evening session. For the benefit of Hansard I ask all advisers to identify themselves before answering a question. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the relevant organisational units within the Police portfolio of the Minister for Police and Community Safety open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr DEMPSEY: Thank you for the opportunity to participate and give an opening statement. As the Minister for Police, I would like to make it clear that today I am very proud to be the minister responsible for the Queensland Police Service. More than 15,000 police officers and civilian staff devote themselves daily to keeping our community safe. They often put themselves in harm's way to do this. Every Queenslanders should be grateful to them for their commitment, dedication and professionalism. The service has recently welcomed a new Police Commissioner designate in Ian Stewart who will carry on the great work of Commissioner Bob Atkinson. I would also like to acknowledge that today will be Robert Atkinson's last estimates, and we all know him favourably. I thank him for his dedication and commitment. He will be sincerely missed not just by the Police Service but also by the community as a whole. Mr Atkinson retires at the end of this month after 44 years of dedicated service and with 12 of these years as the commissioner. As I have mentioned in other functions, when the commissioner came to the service in 1968 there was certainly a different beat from the Beatles. Now he has control of over 15,000 dedicated officers on the beat, and it is a great credit to him and I thank him for that.

Commissioner Atkinson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr DEMPSEY: I also wish Mr Stewart all the best in his demanding new role. Whilst doing that, I also pay tribute to Mr Atkinson for his many years of devotion and service at the helm of this great organisation with the support of his partner and family. Policing in the modern world is a complex and

difficult task and any organisation as large and diverse as the QPS needs an extraordinary level of careful and prudent management. It is essential that we use our resources as efficiently as we possibly can so that we can deliver where they are most needed, and that is on the front line. This year's budget is designed to reduce bureaucracy and red tape. It has delivered a new focus on the front line and it will get Queensland back on track, a pledge we made to the people of Queensland in the run-up to the last election

In this year's budget the government will provide funding for the Police Service in 2012-13 of \$1.979 billion, an increase of \$90.6 million on the previous budget. This includes capital purchases of \$118.7 million. The budget provides funding of \$34.7 million to deliver 300 extra police, the first instalment of a four-year plan to put 1,100 extra police on the beat and move 200 police from non-operational duties back to the front line. I would like to reiterate that this is on top of the normal attrition rates. That is 1,100 extra police. This includes \$1.1 million to establish the Major and Organised Crime Squad on the Gold Coast incorporating an illegal firearms team. I have visited that team and spoken to officers on a number of different occasions. I would like to compliment them on the magnificent results they are achieving. That team is very committed to solving crime not just in that area but throughout the whole of the south-east.

The budget also provides \$30 million for the camera detection program. A total of \$3 million has been set aside to deliver police helicopter services, the first instalment of an \$18 million plan to have two permanent helicopters at the Gold Coast and South-East Queensland. I think that will be very pertinent seeing that the federal government—I thank them for that—has made the commitment for the G20 and also as we lead into the Commonwealth Games. We have allocated \$2.5 million to replace three Water Police catamarans based at Cairns, Townsville and Whitsunday. They are very impressive vessels. This is the first instalment of a \$12.7 million pledge over three years.

Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers will receive \$1 million, the first instalment of \$4 million pledged over the next four years. As all members here would know, Neighbourhood Watch does a magnificent job out in the community. This will enhance them and bring them into the 21st century in terms of technology. It will improve the two-way interaction between police and the community and allow information to be passed on to police as quickly as possible. We all know that police are only as good as the information they receive. The budget provides \$27.1 million in capital funding for ICT initiatives including \$3.6 million to complete the rollout of the Queensland Computer Aided Dispatch system. A total of \$38 million has been allocated for new and replacement vehicles. An amount of \$37.8 million has been allocated for capital works across the state, which includes \$27.1 million to complete the internal infrastructure at the new Police Academy—that relates to a number of previous contractual agreements—\$6.6 million to refurbish and upgrade the existing police facilities; \$2 million for closed circuit cameras in watch-houses as part of an ongoing program; \$1.3 million to continue the police housing program, which includes provision of police accommodation in rural and remote areas; and \$800,000 to upgrade the Broadbeach Police Station. We have also set aside \$1.5 million to extend the trial of the drink-safe precincts in Townsville, Surfers Paradise and Fortitude Valley.

These measures will go towards providing Queenslanders with the efficient, effective, responsive and professional Police Service they deserve. I would like to say thank you for the opportunity to make this opening statement today. I look forward to the deliberations of the committee here this evening.

CHAIR: Before we start our questions, I might say, Commissioner Atkinson, we have certainly had a wonderful time knowing you as commissioner. During my career it has been an honour to work with you. Would you like to say a few words before we start questions?

Commissioner Atkinson: Thank you, Chair, and I appreciate that opportunity. For the record, my name is Bob Atkinson. I am currently the Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service until the 31st of this month. It has been a privilege and something that I am very grateful for to have been able to represent the people in the police department. As the minister said, there are nearly 15,000 people. It has always been my view that the role has a number of responsibilities. Obviously, firstly, it is the police department's responsibility to provide for the safety and security of the people of Queensland; secondly—and these are not in any particular order—there is a responsibility to the criminal justice system in terms of the police department's role and part in it; thirdly, to implement the policies of the government of the day; fourthly and finally, to provide that support and leadership for the 15,000 people in the police department and represent them to the best of your ability. Again, it has been a great privilege—indeed an honour—to have been able to do that for the last 12 years. I wish my successor, Ian Stewart, well in that role. I am sure he will do a fine job. Thank you for the chance to say a few words.

CHAIR: I now call the member for Rockhampton.

Mr BYRNE: I would like to, for once, endorse the comments of the minister and the chair in regard to the service that the commissioner has rendered to the Queensland Police Service and the Queensland community more broadly. I think the fact that you have been able to impress any and all who have had anything to do with you during your working life is a real credit to you. On behalf of the Labor Party, I want to wish you the best in your retirement. I am sure that you will not be missing these

sorts of occasions. Minister, with reference to page 4 of the Queensland Police Service SDS, there is \$1 million—\$4 million over four years—to revitalise front-line community crime stopper prevention services through Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers. I draw the minister's attention to his election promise to place an officer in every police station to coordinate crime prevention initiatives like Neighbourhood Watch. On 5 June 2012 the minister answered question on notice No. 205 and reaffirmed his commitment to provide an officer at every station for Neighbourhood Watch. On 31 July the minister provided a different answer in question on notice No. 426 when he said that he would provide a police officer in every district which, to my mind, is a significant difference. On which occasion did the minister get it right? Will you make a statement now to correct the record in regard to that election promise?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. As I have stated, the role of Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers is very important throughout the whole of the state. As you know, previously I was a police officer, so I know the importance of Neighbourhood Watch. As previously stated, the police are only as good as the information they get. Whether it be a small or large Neighbourhood Watch, in some areas we have seen periods when attendance at Neighbourhood Watch meetings has decreased. As a government we want to reinvigorate and restimulate Neighbourhood Watch. We also want to increase the youth participation within Neighbourhood Watch and try to get those young people to connect back into the community. Those who attend Neighbourhood Watch would know the great pleasure derived from meeting positive and enthusiastic people and people who are more givers than takers in their community.

I will answer the last part of the question and continue from there. What we are wanting to do in the QPS is similar to what we have done with the adopt-a-cop programs and so forth. We want to have a person—and we already have a number of officers within police stations—who attends Neighbourhood Watch meetings. We want to redefine the commitment of the QPS and have particular officers assigned to Neighbourhood Watches. When I talk about the difference between stations and districts, you will always have a district coordinator of a Neighbourhood Watch, but down at the station level you will be able to have a police officer who is assigned to a Neighbourhood Watch in that particular area.

As I said before, the initiative is a significant part of the government's plan to boost the fight against crime through the community partnerships and the government's strong focus on information sharing between local communities and police. That is why we are providing the \$4 million over the next four years to inject new life into Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers. As we all know, Crime Stoppers helps police gather information from the public on crime related matters. It allows people to provide information anonymously through the toll-free telephone number, the interactive website, email and the post.

As we know, Crime Stoppers in Queensland is incorporated by Crime Stoppers Queensland Ltd. Since commencing operation in 1987—a great credit for them—Crime Stoppers Queensland has collected over 156,472 pieces of information from members of the public as at 30 June 2012. This information provided to police has resulted in—this is very significant—22,581 people being apprehended. More than 59,833 charges have been laid, 21 murders have been solved, 20 attempted murders have been solved and more than \$590 million worth of drugs has been confiscated. More than \$3 million in proceeds of crime has been seized and more than \$10 million worth of stolen property has been recovered.

The funding in 2012 will provide for an anticrime campaign focusing on illegal possession of firearms. That is one of the areas we want to target. It will also deliver a training conference for all 400 Crime Stoppers volunteers around Queensland to renew their skills and focus on new directions in the program. This will also enhance their capacity to engage the greater community with the Crime Stoppers program. Earlier I mentioned the increase of technology and the communication between the different groups.

Neighbourhood Watch is focused on the community working together to reduce crime and enhance community safety. As we all know, it is a community based program run by very valuable volunteers. Initially, Neighbourhood Watch focused on improving home security and reducing the fear of crime, which we all know, especially amongst the elderly in our community, comes at great expense, and not just financially. The fear of crime restricts a number of people to their household. We have to make sure we reduce that fear and make people feel safe. Crime Stoppers and Neighbourhood Watch have a great partnership with the police. There is particular value in reporting suspicious activity to police.

Over time Neighbourhood Watch has evolved. Groups have been involved in broader community safety issues. I know for a fact that my Neighbourhood Watches do a number of different things around the Bundaberg area that were not originally designed for Neighbourhood Watches. The government recognises its contribution to front-line crime prevention. That is why we have committed to providing funding to renew and reinvigorate the Neighbourhood Watch program. It will also increase its focus on improving community relationships to help reduce crime and particularly the fear of crime.

We want to make sure we adapt and bring along young people as well. Funding will help take Neighbourhood Watch online, with a focus on social media. Social media will enable timely delivery of information by local police to communities. The funding will support the creation of a dedicated Neighbourhood Watch website and the development of promotional and marketing material.

I invite the member to at any time visit the myPolice blogs. We have released them in four different centres, the last being in Toowoomba. That is part of the technological advancements that we are striving towards in connecting the QPS and the community a lot more. I will ask the commissioner if he has any comments in relation to the value of Neighbourhood Watch.

Commissioner Atkinson: I think it is fair to say that there is an exciting future with technology as Neighbourhood Watch moves from its current form into a form that will be based on technology and the ready availability of data for people in their local communities. We do not want to leave behind people who are not comfortable with technology, either—those who in many cases have served Neighbourhood Watch for many years. We are very mindful of that. The link with Crime Stoppers I think will be a positive thing. Every one of our 31 districts does have a crime prevention coordinator. The intention, as I understand the policy position, is that each station will have someone who will have assigned responsibility.

Mr BYRNE: That is what I was looking for: will there be an officer tasked in each station?

Mr DEMPSEY: Yes.

Mr BYRNE: Excellent. Minister, page 4 of the QPS SDS talks about \$358.3 million over four years for 1,100 new police officers, which you mentioned in your introductory comments. This is obviously aligned to your election commitments. It has been said that police recruits having tertiary qualifications before entry is an 'important prerequisite to professionalise the service' and, in relation to the Fitzgerald inquiry, 'we need to make sure that when we are recruiting we have qualifications that mean they will be suitable to be police officers and are not just coming in through other means which can lead to a culture that would be unhealthy for the service'. Do you agree with those statements?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. In relation to the comments you have made, the standard of young people coming through and their educational qualifications are far higher than was the case 20 years ago—and I certainly hope so. As a community and as a state, we put a value on our young people growing and achieving high educational standards. The Queensland Police Service sets a very high standard—it is one of the highest standards in Australia—in relation to its acceptance of recruits to the Queensland Police Service. It certainly knows about accountability and transparency and knows the expectations of the people of Queensland that a high standard is set in relation to those accountabilities. We have to ensure a correct balance.

In relation to recruiting, particularly in recent times such a large number have been coming through that we have to ensure we vet people properly. At the end of the day, the Queensland Police Service will get the best of the best in this state. I make no apologies for that. Someone said that people can join the armed services at 18—I know that—but you have to reach such high standards. I have great confidence in the recruiting section of the Queensland Police Service to make the proper selections in relation to the people who are finally sworn in. Once people are sworn in as police officers training continues for a number of months, if not years.

As I said previously, the QPS maintains very high standards in relation to recruit selection. Entry is highly competitive and based on merit. The police recruit selection includes assessment of applicants' physical health, stature, personal integrity, cognitive ability and literacy, physical and psychological suitability, life and work experience and practical policing skills—obviously driving and verbal communication, which are very important to police officers on the street. The new recruitment entry path, REP, was introduced on 1 June 2012. The REP selection process includes an entrance exam, medical examination, integrity vetting, shuttle-run test—obviously, as we know, fitness—a panel interview—

Mr BYRNE: Minister, I was just looking for a yes or no, whether you agreed with the comments.

Mr DEMPSEY:—referees' checks and physical testing. This is a very important issue in relation to the high standard of selection within the QPS. The QPS also considers other applicant attributes such as academic and vocational education and voluntary and community service. In our new police officers coming through we want a commitment to the community. We all know that policing is a life job, and we have to make sure we have officers who are connected to the community and will go that extra mile to serve their community.

Prospective applicants are now required to sit the police entrance exam. Bringing Queensland's requirements for new entries in line with those in other Australian jurisdictions will enable Queensland to compete with the best of other states. We have to make sure that we look outside Queensland to everywhere else.

In addition, there is a change to accept people straight from year 12 as well as those with a year 10 education who have worked full time for at least three years. I know that the member and the chairman would respect that particular issue. Young men and women who have left school early and have gone out and trained in a trade have moved on with their skills and will now have an opportunity to come back and try to get into the Police Service.

As of 9 October 2012—only two days ago—7,240 people had completed an expression of interest and more than 3,820 eligible people had undertaken the preapplication recruit entrance exam. From the information I have, that is one of the highest levels. A further 840 eligible people are currently being booked in for the entrance exam over the coming months to further enhance the 2013-14 recruitment application pool. This is very important.

We still have the PACE program for not just young people but also a number of police officers who are attached to other states. They can apply for the Queensland Police Service and have their years of experience in other police services throughout Australia recognised.

Mr BYRNE: Mr Chairman—

CHAIR: Excuse me, member for Rockhampton. You have asked a question. The minister has all the time he wants to answer it—as long as he wants. He can talk for as long as he wants as long as it is relevant, and it is very relevant. Continue, thanks, Minister.

Mr DEMPSEY: Since April 2012, recruit intakes have increased to achieve the additional 300 police officers to be inducted before 30 June 2013. We will continue in that vein. To date, 459 recruits have commenced a recruitment training program and a further 312 are scheduled to begin training over the next four months to ensure the additional 300 officers are inducted before 30 June.

I invite the member out to the academy. It would be a privilege to have him out there to see the high standards we have at the academy—the dedication of the trainers and the support of the families. I know that the member has attended many inductions in other services and that he understands the importance of the support of family for officers, because they will see the worst of the state as well as the best of the state. It is important that we as a government understand that and that we understand the complexities of the family and the officer. I will ask the commissioner if he wants to add anything.

Commissioner Atkinson: There is probably little I can add unless there is something specific. We place a high value on tertiary qualifications—it is now part of our culture internally to do that—but the lack of a tertiary qualification will not prevent someone from joining the police department. There is a battery of entry tests and assessment. If a person has the potential to be a capable police officer, the lack of a tertiary qualification will not prevent that individual from successfully completing our training program and being sworn in. We are in a very competitive marketplace.

Mr BYRNE: I take that as, yes, you support the statements.

Mr DEMPSEY: Just to add to that, we understand not only the complexities of policing but also the value of the CMC and the oversight in relation to police officers and, obviously, the expectations of the Queensland public of police officers in a modern society. We have to make no excuses for ensuring we set the highest standards. I thank the member for the question.

Mr BYRNE: I am glad that you do support them because there were comments at the last estimates hearing by then shadow police minister Langbroek. He put on the record the views of the then opposition about what should be occurring with police recruitment.

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question in relation to police recruitment and previous comments by other members. As a previous serving officer of almost 20 years in the police, I certainly understand the responsibilities, the day-to-day actions of the Police Service, and the commitment to high standards in relation to those accountabilities. When I go to police stations and police establishments I reiterate that commitment and the understanding that, in a service of over 15,000 members and approximately 10,500 police officers, one person's action reflects on the whole of the group. It is very important that every individual understands that responsibility. I just wanted to clarify that for the member's sake to ensure that he understands the support that this government has for the Police Service and its commitment to the highest ethical standards within the Queensland Police Service. That has been reiterated with our current commissioner and the commissioner-elect, who have set very high standards.

Mr BYRNE: Commissioner, I refer to the same point relating to the \$358 million for the 1,100 new police. In response to questioning by the former shadow minister for police, Mr Langbroek, at estimates last year in relation to questions about lowering recruitment standards—

Mr DEMPSEY: Mr Chairman, I just interrupt the member. I and my officers do not mind answering any type of question, but I do not know how reference back to comments from a previous shadow minister from a previous estimates hearing over 12 months ago would reflect on the SDS in relation to what is currently before us and what we are assessing in order to have such a high standard for the people of Queensland. I just think that that belittles the process and I would like to see a higher standard in relation to ensuring that the questions are relevant to the SDS before us.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Could you ask a question please, member for Rockhampton?

Mr BYRNE: Sure. Commissioner, in response to questioning from the former shadow minister, Mr Langbroek, at estimates last year in relation to questions about lowering recruitment standards, you stated that you were a strong supporter of tertiary education and were keeping front of mind the Fitzgerald reforms in that area. In September 2012—just recently—you made a speech where you stated—

Getting people who want to be police officers who are suitable, that's probably the bigger challenge.

You went on to say—

I can't really imagine that we would have anybody at the police department who wasn't 21 years of age—

You went on to say—

... the person with the right qualities, and I think at 21 years of age you are old enough to be a police officer.

Commissioner, can you explain what, as I interpret it from that position, has changed or is changing and what role, if any, government has had in that and what process the Queensland Police Service went through in order to come up with a new selection criteria?

Commissioner Atkinson: Thank you. In a sense, there has not been any change at all. We have always been wanting to recruit the person of the highest possible calibre to be police officers. What has evolved and changed over time though is the selection process and where we are now at—and I think it is a good place that we are now at—is that we will not exclude someone simply because they do not have some form of tertiary qualification. There is an initial assessment and from that the first gate is an entrance exam, and roughly around about 50 per cent of people get to the second gate after passing the entrance examine. There are then a battery of tests in terms of the potential learning capacity of the individual, their ethical values, their character and psychological tests in terms of their suitability in terms of encountering the stressful situations they will encounter.

We are in a very competitive marketplace. Our attrition rate was running at close to five per cent. Fortunately that has dropped and it is now down to around about 3½ per cent to four per cent, but at five per cent we were losing 500 people a year, and might I say that five per cent attrition is a very low standard by industry standards. Many companies would think that 10 per cent is a minimum, but for us with the 300 additional police that meant we were needing, will need and would have need to recruit 800 each year and it is a very competitive marketplace. The dedication of the people who train is such that some of them in that 6½-month program approximately will actually lose income from the job that they had previously. Our average recruitment age is 24, which has dropped a bit. It was 28. That has come down a bit. I think that is probably a good thing too. But, as I mentioned earlier, we still absolutely highly value tertiary qualifications. That is part of our culture. But tertiary qualifications of themselves should not exclude someone who might have a lot of life experience, perhaps spent a lot of time in the bush and would make a fine police officer. I hope that answers your question, but I am happy to go into more detail if it does not.

Mr BYRNE: No, that is fine. Thanks, Commissioner.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I now call the member for Broadwater.

Miss BARTON: Minister, page 4 of the SDS indicates that \$3 million will be spent providing helicopter policing support to the Queensland Police Service in 2012-13. This is part of a total commitment of \$18 million over four years to deliver two police helicopters to provide air support to criminal investigations and high-speed pursuits. Can you please explain to the committee what will be delivered by this funding and why the government believes the QPS does need a helicopter capability?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question and also put on record that I note her support as the member for Broadwater in that she has raised issues in relation to police matters in that community, which will obviously benefit from helicopter support as we go forward. It is important obviously to provide police with air support for criminal investigations and high-speed pursuits. Helicopters can be used as a surveillance and information gathering platform and the government is providing \$3 million in 2012-13 as part of an \$18 million commitment over four years to deliver police helicopter services for the Gold Coast and South-East Queensland. Currently the QPS has an interim contract with the Westpac Lifesaver Helicopter Rescue Service until November, and I thank Surf Life Saving for that. I think it is a great partnership with its helicopters and facilities down on the coast. It is a good match and it will suffice until the permanency of those contracts are completed. I also inform the committee that we have to ensure that we comply with Australian free trade agreements in relation to the amount of the contracts going forward and will continue to do that.

The QPS has recently conducted a tender process to continue services from November 2012 to 30 June 2014. The evaluation of the contract is in its final stages of completion and the contract should be awarded in early October. The new contract is part of the government's commitment to delivering two dedicated police helicopters for the Gold Coast and South-East Queensland by 2014-15. As I said previously, this will be a great advantage for the G20. The government has announced a review of its air services operations to ensure efficiency and value for money and, at this stage, a review will not affect the QPS helicopter service.

Since its introduction on 7 November 2011 until 23 September, the Gold Coast helicopter has undertaken 633 cumulative flight hours; 1,176 planned operations and 586 tasks in response to calls from the community, being the first police unit to arrive on the scene on over 80 per cent of occasions; 141 traffic related tasks; 636 crime hot spot patrols; and 248 responses to community complaints, including public order, assault, home invasion and shootings. You can see the value of having a helicopter in the skies. Examples of where the helicopter has assisted include on 10 December 2011 where a helicopter attended McLarens Landing on South Stradbroke Island and conducted a search for a male who had gone missing in bushland. You can imagine what other resources this would have taken in the past. The infrared scan of the bushland located a heat source lying in the bush and the helicopter guided Water Police officers to the heat source in total darkness and the person was located. This removed the need obviously for an extensive land and sea search rescue. Given the sheer complexities of trying to conduct that at night in that type of terrain, it surely would have assisted in terms of the safety of all involved, not just the individual but all of the emergency crews and the Police Service. So it is of great value.

Another example is that a motorcycle was being ridden dangerously at 170 kilometres an hour on the M1 at Coomera. It travelled at speed through traffic lights and the rider was not aware that he was being observed. The use of the helicopter service removed the need for a police pursuit, which we will continue to review as that goes forward. So the ground units were coordinated and the offender was taken into custody whilst he was stationary in Southport. That is a great credit to the helicopter service. There have been other incidents of people being taken to safety in terms of assisting lifeguards and the helicopter can be first on the scene at break and enters and able to coordinate and liaise with other police units in the proximity to ensure that we get a positive result. In that regard, at Parkwood five occupants were arrested for break and enter offences, a great credit for the helicopter service, and it possibly may have taken a lot of other resources in order to achieve that same result.

The helicopter service has also assisted with stolen vehicles, as I mentioned before, and youths tagging a train and causing significant damage. It is these types of offences that you would not expect a helicopter service to achieve, but it coordinated the ground crews when the youths ran from the scene. We have to think of the safety of not just our emergency services but the safety of those young people. Even though they may be offending and participating in antisocial behaviour, we still have to take into account their safety as well. We are able to do that in coordination with the helicopter. The helicopter service has been able to locate armed robbery suspects and their vehicle. There have been numerous offences that have been solved by the police helicopter team. They are a dedicated group of individuals and we as a government and the Queensland Police Service are ensuring that we train more officers in that specialised area, not just for the helicopter we have now but for the helicopters that will come in the future. Obviously we are learning from what has happened in other states and other jurisdictions to ensure that we get this right for the safety of the whole community. Would you like to make any comment in relation to that question?

Commissioner Atkinson: Thanks, Minister. I think the minister has fairly comprehensively covered it. The only additional comment would be that helicopters certainly are a valuable addition to our aircraft. In a state the size of Queensland, aircraft capability is so important to us. Another issue with the helicopter—a little bit that I could add to the minister's comments—is that the presence of the helicopter and the availability of the helicopter is very good for public confidence as well. That is all. I thank you for that opportunity.

Mr WOODFORTH: Minister, again on page 4 of the SDS I note that the government is strengthening the school based policing and adopt-a-school programs. Would you please tell the committee why these are important aspects of policing and how they will contribute to the government's Safer Streets Crime Action Plan?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member and also note his support for the Police Service and his overall understanding of the value of having a safe community to not just allay people's fears but for a community to grow as an economic base—that is, for the people who live in Nudgee to enjoy the lovely lifestyle and also for the businesses that thrive there to know that they operate in a safe environment. I have previously been an Adopt-a-Cop at a number of state schools throughout Queensland. As police officers know, particularly in small communities, you get involved. I am sure that the member for Bundamba knows that she has some great officers in Goodna. They do a magnificent job. They give of their own time, particularly in their Adopt-a-Cop roles and its extension to the whole of the school community. In relation to school based police officers, they are invaluable as well, and not just in their role from a crime initiative; they link the schools together. They bring the teachers, the students and a number of family members together for particular issues. It is very important to have that whole-of-community aspect which is so important to a small community.

Returning to the member for Bundamba, I attended the Bundamba Primary School and I certainly remember the times at that school and the importance of having good teachers and good peers within the community. As such, school based police officers achieve that. As a government we are obviously committed to delivering more front-line support for our youth. We are revitalising school and community based policing across Queensland. One element is obviously a revitalisation of the school based

policing program, which is a joint initiative between the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Education, Training and Employment. The program helps high schools and the community by addressing and identifying needs within the school community, and it is having someone there at the time to get it done in a timely manner and not let things drag on; helping teachers develop and present curriculum material to meet school, police and community needs; and undertaking the initial response and investigation of offences at the school.

We know a school is a hub of not only a number of young people but also adults in the community. If we can get these matters solved in a timely manner, it is for the betterment for everyone. In terms of the delivery of this program, the government is providing 15 additional school based police officers by the end of 2012. The plan is for them to be in place for start of the 2013 school year. So they will have a short time for integration. They will be based at Bentley Park College; Trinity Bay State High School in the far-northern region; Bowen State High School in the northern region, which is definitely a growing area; Glenmore State High School; Pioneer State High School; Gladstone State High School within the central region, which the member for Rockhampton would know very well; and Nambour State High School in the north coast region, which is a beautiful community as well. It has certainly been asking for a school based police officer. I am glad that we are able to facilitate that and we will work towards other initiatives within that particular area in the future, because Nambour certainly is a growing community. These officers will also be based at Lockyer District State High School; Toowoomba State High School; Flagstone State Community College; Southport State High School and Upper Coomera State College in the south-east region; Sandgate State High School in the metro north region; Brisbane Bayside College and Brisbane State High School, which I attended for two years of my academic life and I certainly have fond memories of those years there.

Another element of the program involves the Queensland establishment of the Adopt-a-School Program, which is planned to begin in the 2013 year. The program will connect local police officers to local schools where there is no permanent school based police officer. I refer to my answer to a question asked by the member for Rockhampton, which alluded to the emphasis on Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers. We are getting back to old-style policing as well. So if a school does not have a school based police officer, we will have a police officer assigned to a particular school to know what the concerns are within that school. That way a police officer can create an identity and people in the school gain an affinity with a particular officer. As we know, stations get busy and schools get busy. But if you have a particular officer assigned from a police station, then they are able to create that relationship with the young people there. That is occurring whilst we continue the school based program. We will continue to roll out this program in the future, because it is an aspect that I am very keen on.

Police will continue to work collaboratively with local school communities to develop community safety and crime prevention strategies. These programs will address local issues and the police will contribute to a safe and supportive learning environment, which is very important. We see so many issues in schools, whether that be through Facebook and other social media, let alone the issue of bullying and lack of connection that often arises in a number of communities. We have to make sure that we can do all we can to build good citizenship within our schools.

School based police officers and officers assigned under the Adopt-a-School program will support the schools and particularly students at risk of offending. In this way, the government is supporting police officers to provide early intervention and support for our most valuable children. Commissioner, would you like to add to that?

Commissioner Atkinson: Thank you, Minister. I think you have pretty much covered most of the points. Certainly, our involvement with young people in a positive way is terribly important. Can I just commend the other two areas, too, that work in this space. That is the police-citizens youth clubs throughout the state and the other one is our child protection and investigation unit officers throughout the state. Everything we do is important, but working with young people is arguably the most important thing that we do.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister and Commissioner.

Mr CHOAT: Minister, gun crime continues to be a real and very serious concern of the community. Page 4 of the SDS states that an illegal firearms team is established on the Gold Coast. I would like to bring to the attention of the room that two of my colleagues, the member for Nicklin and the member for Toowoomba North, and I are wearing ties in memory of the late Damian Leeding, who was tragically murdered in the line of duty. Could the minister please outline to the committee how this government is tackling illegal guns, armed robbery and other firearm offences?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. It is important. Obviously, as I alluded to before, I grew up in the Ipswich area and I know the complexities, particularly in Ipswich West. You have a great football family over there with the Langers who attended Brassall State School and certainly contributed to rugby league folklore in that area. I am sure the community of Ipswich West understands the importance of making sure that we have the toughest firearm laws in not just Queensland but in Australia.

We make no apologies for introducing the toughest firearm laws in Australia. There will be mandatory sentencing for possession of a concealable firearm for one year. If you are trafficking or supplying firearms, there is a mandatory sentence of five years. So whilst we recognise the importance of getting on top of illegal firearms and their devastating effects and link that with what is happening across other police districts throughout the whole state, we will also have to make sure that we strike a balance with legal firearm owners.

Before I go on to the legal firearm owners, on a national level the commissioner and I are working on how we can work in better with the other states and even international jurisdictions. We all know these people who perpetrate misery in dealing with illegal firearms know no boundaries. We have to make sure that we have a unified approach in relation to dealing with firearm offenders. We also have to make sure that we have a coordinated approach, particularly on our state borders. Queensland is unique in that we have another nation on our border in the Torres Strait. It is important that we address the seriousness of illegal firearms.

But we are also looking continuously at making sure that we set the highest standards for legal firearm owners in terms of getting a firearm licence and making sure that, once that high standard has been met, once that person has ticked every box and dotted every i, the paperwork has efficiencies. That is what we are looking at and that is why we have established a weapons licensing panel. In that regard we will continue to work on the processing of licences. In other states applications can take anything up to a matter of weeks. We want to make sure that we have that high standard, but we also want to make sure that we have efficiencies in the processing. If we can achieve greater efficiencies in the processing, that means that as a state we have police officers out performing other operational duties besides processing applications for people. It is very important that we have a balance but also that we maintain the highest standard.

The criminal investigation branches and the tactical crime squads across the state provide the first response to armed robberies and firearm offences. In addition, the State Crime Operations Command's Organised Crime Group conducts operations against high-level organised crime targets. It also provides specialised response and support to regional investigations. The group includes a dedicated armed robbery unit and a firearms investigation team. The armed robbery unit deals with more significant and violent armed robberies—bank robberies, credit union robberies and robberies of TABs and licensed premises. The armed robbery unit also undertakes investigations into unsolved and historic cold cases involving armed robberies. With technological advancements in the scientific section, we are able to go back to a lot of these cold cases and collate evidence and use the latest technologies to solve them, which is a great credit to the Queensland Police Service and the men and women in it.

The state-wide firearms investigation team was established in January 2012. It currently has five members. It is focused on investigating suspected unlawful trafficking, supply and possession of firearms throughout the state. Since its inception in January to September this year, the firearms investigation team has coordinated and been responsible for the arrest of 110 people on 313 charges and has resulted in the seizure and recovery of 58 firearms.

The government will also be expanding the Major and Organised Crime Squad on the Gold Coast. It has added 10 positions to increase the squad to 30 officers. I have been down there and seen some of the results and they are quite significant. These extra positions are part of an extra 100 extra officers who are committed to the south-east police region. The squad investigates serious and organised criminal offences and organisations. It also maintains a dedicated firearm investigation team. It also allows the Brisbane based teams to focus on the remainder of other state firearm offences. Only since November last year to August this year that squad has arrested 162 offenders and 550 offences have been recorded, with 25 illegal firearms and other handguns and shotguns. We are also seeing now these conducted energy types of weapons throughout Queensland. When these firearm offences take place, you usually find that they are committed by perpetrators of other offences, whether that be breaking and entering, attempted murder and so forth. So it is very good to get on to those offenders in a timely manner.

Besides arresting those offenders on firearm offences, those police officers have also seized \$1.1 million worth of drugs, including cannabis, amphetamines, cocaine and heroin, and they have restrained over half a million dollars—and I know the member for Nicklin would be interested in this—in assets relating to criminal offences and organisations. We really have to strike at the heart of these organisations because, as we all know, that they are in it for the money. The whole community has to suffer, but these organisations are after the money. The squad identified a group of offenders and continues to make sure that we address the issue of the possession of illegal firearms.

In closing, the member for Ipswich West commented on Damian Leeding. I thank a number of members of the panel for wearing a tie to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Damian Leeding. When an officer pays the ultimate sacrifice for doing his job in serving the people of Queensland, it has an effect not only on his colleagues but also the whole community. When you see a whole community coming together, as you saw on the death of Damian Leeding, it is great testimony of the support that the Police Service receives from the people of Queensland and that is very much welcomed. Although I am not commenting on that matter, because it is still before the court, we will do whatever we can to make sure that these types of offenders are brought to justice in a quick fashion.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr BYRNE: Minister, I draw your attention to the response to question on notice No. 14, which stated that you could not really provide us with a budget of any section or squad under the State Crime Operations Command, which includes the Organised Crime Group, the drug squads and the Child Safety and Sexual Assault Group. I note that you failed to provide budget figures really for 2012-13. You did provide the current spend up to 23 September 2012.

I am surprised that you are not able to provide a budget. In fact, it is an extraordinary answer. I would have expected much more granularity in a question about the budget of that group. The current spend is for nearly a quarter of the year, and if you extrapolate that out it is about \$65 million, which is \$12 million less than the 2011-12 budget. Can you guarantee that the budget for this group has not been compromised to the degree suggested by the material you have provided? Can you guarantee that there is no budget cut of that nature and that no investigations will suffer as a consequence of this, given that, I would think, this is the very hub of the Queensland Police Service?

Mr DEMPSEY: Can you repeat the question?

Mr BYRNE: In essence, we asked you for a specific budgetary position for the State Crimes Operation Command. You are unable to provide that, as you will see in the answer to the question. All we have is a spend rate to a particular date. From that raw math, as you extrapolate that out by four, it looks like there has been a serious cut to that command. I would have thought that is the centre of gravity of some of the serious elements of the way in which the Queensland Police Service does its business. I need your assurance that the cuts are not anything like approaching what that maths tells us. I also need an assurance that there is no serious compromise of any potential investigative capacity within that group. I will add a bit to it about your corporate governance structures if you are unable to tell us what the budget is and how you are tracking on that budget at any point in any given year.

Mr DEMPSEY: There are a number of questions there, but basically there will be no compromise at all to the safety of the community. Budgets are centrally allocated to each region. Assistant commissioners set, monitor and adjust district group budgets throughout the year. There is an overall state allocation that then goes down to the regions. This ensures service delivery is responsive to demand. We are cutting out other layers of bureaucracy. Many years ago many different levels would have to be gone through to get authorisation to be able to achieve that. As the budgets of groups are fluid and not centrally managed it is not possible to provide the budget figures. I have a table here of actual expenditure in 2010-11, 2011-12 and to 23 September 2012. I am able to table that. It is also important to note that staff were employed within each group within those particulars years and up to 23 September 2012. When we see a large section, whether it be an organised crime group as you have mentioned, that may be an individual group but it might service a number of other areas throughout the whole of the state. I would ask the Commissioner if he would like to comment in relation to the member's question.

Commissioner Atkinson: Thank you, sir. The budget of the State Crimes Operation Command has increased this year from last year and from last year to the year before. Of course, some of that increase relates to committed salary increases in terms of union agreements, but the budget has increased. It is true to say that we have assistant commissioners in charge of regions and commands and we give them the autonomy to deliver the services that we require them to deliver and allow them to do that in their own way. Perhaps one example in the material I think you have before you, and I think it is the only area, where from 2010-11 to 2011-12 there was a reduction was in the homicide group, but my understanding of that is that that is because there were less homicides state-wide that required a massive relocation of detectives for a longer term to investigate. But across the board the command's budget has increased. I share your view that the work they do is, as is everyone's work, quite important. For the public serious and major crime of course is a very important issue. We would certainly undertake to take a further question on notice if there was a specific question and provide that to you through the chair.

Mr BYRNE: I was surprised by the answer. The question was a question on notice and not anywhere in my working life dealing with finances and so forth in any department or any structure I have been associated with would I have expected to see a reply like that that basically says we do not know what is going on. That is the way I could interpret it. I would have thought that the granularity on your spend rates each month would be well known to you: you would know exactly where your spend is, what your allocation is and whether you are tracking according to projections or not and that would be justified against your activity rate. I find it extraordinary that that answer would come back. That is why I am questioning it.

Commissioner Atkinson: There was certainly no sense of being unhelpful in the answer, but there is a degree of unpredictability in terms of policing. I could not say to you that tomorrow there might be a shocking case in Townsville that will require a number of detectives from State Crime Operations Command to be relocated in Townsville for three or six months which would be quite expensive. Probably a good example in recent times is the Dr Patel investigation based out of Bundaberg. We had a significant number of detectives that simply had to stay in Bundaberg for an extended period of time and that was quite expensive. With respect, it is just not possible to entirely predict how it will unfold.

Mr BYRNE: I accept that, but I also accept that you have a baseline recurrent cost structure to all of your organisation—it is as simple as that—and that there would be activity based surges or declines and they would be able to be managed within a budget. When an operation comes up I assume you do a budget and you know what the projected costs of it are going to be before you execute. I do not see that that should be problematic in terms of managing your budget unless you end up with a massive number of operations that are well behind any of your historical data. I still say that you should be able to sit in front of this committee and give a clear indication of where you are tracking financially in the given year when the question is asked. That answer simply did not do that.

Commissioner Atkinson: That may have been a misunderstanding but certainly if there was any specific question could I take it on notice?

Mr BYRNE: Sure.

Mr DEMPSEY: The budget for the State Crime Operations Command in 2011-12 was \$68.79 million and in 2012-13 this increased to \$80.74 million which is an increase of \$11.95 million, an increase in percentage terms of 17.4 per cent. Just to add further to what the Commissioner was saying, I have full confidence in the Police Service getting the best value for every dollar that it is given. The member must understand that whilst we have increased the budget to that particular area by \$11.95 million, a number of unplanned operations may come up. There are complexities within the command and this obviously gives flexibility at a station, district and regional level.

Mr BYRNE: Minister, I refer to page 11 of QPS SDS, professional standards and ethical practice, and the loss of 11 staff from the Ethical Standards Command. They appear to include a principal investigator, a senior investigator and a senior ethics adviser. Will these cuts to these positions increase the likelihood of corruption in the QPS when at the same time other important Fitzgerald Inquiry reforms are being diminished, such as the education and age requirements for entry? Is it signalling a return to previous bad practice? Why are the positions being cut? And what will the QPS do to replace the work of these investigators and advisers, particularly in light of today's revelations that 74 positions are being lost from the CMC?

Mr DEMPSEY: The simple answer to that question is no, but for the sake of the committee, the Queensland Police Service puts a great deal of emphasis on the ethical standards of its police officers. It ensures that we have a disciplinary process that continues to meet community expectations in relation to that type of behaviour. Since coming to government from the political side of it and the policy side of it we are reviewing the disciplinary process and we are reviewing that in relation to a number of stakeholders, including the CMC, Ethical Standards Command themselves, as well as police officers, the Police Union and the Queensland Police Commissioned Officers' Union of Employees.

These positions involve admin positions as well as a number of research positions. As far as lowering standards, I have full confidence in relation to the Ethical Standards Command. The Commissioner designate was actually in charge of ethical standards prior to his appointment and he will continue on in that vein. The CMC is obviously an important part of that ethical standards process. Whilst we are continuing that review we will make sure that they address the concerns of the community.

Mr BYRNE: Are these police officers or civilians?

Mr DEMPSEY: Civilians.

Mr BYRNE: They are civilian positions, are they?

Mr DEMPSEY: Yes.

Commissioner Atkinson: We could go into more detail if you wish, but they are civilian positions. No sworn police officer position has been cut from Ethical Standards Command. I share the sentiment that the most important thing for us is to maintain public confidence. We are all—not just the new Commissioner but all of us at every level of senior management in the service—committed to never, ever, ever going back to the Fitzgerald time. Our commitment to that is absolute. It is fundamentally important because our effectiveness is dependent on the confidence and support of the community and if the community think we have slipped into a corruption space then we will lose that in a heartbeat. We are very conscious as well that that means eternal vigilance. I am absolutely certain that there is no systemic, organised, widespread corruption in the Queensland Police Service. We recognise as well that eternal vigilance is important to maintain.

Mr BYRNE: I appreciate that and that is what I would expect. I have not the slightest reason to doubt what you are saying. Of course I agree with it. But you would understand that cutting those positions in Ethical Standards Command—a principal investigator, a senior ethics adviser—would be seen by those not as well informed as yourself as pretty negative no matter how you try to explain it. You would appreciate that, I would imagine.

Commissioner Atkinson: As part of the previous government we lost positions because of our contribution to the EB. Part of this government's financial policy position requires us to make savings. The totality of those savings is the equivalent of 332 positions by 30 June next year. A target for us was

120 positions by the end of September. We were able to achieve those 120 positions through natural attrition and not filling vacancies. None of those 120 positions resulted in anyone being sacked. That was a great credit to Deputy Commissioner Barnett who chaired a committee that managed that. Every part of the service had to share in terms of that reduction and Ethical Standards Command was no different. I can only restate that our commitment to professional and ethical standards and not to have slippage is absolute for all of us.

Mr DEMPSEY: Just to add to that, through you Mr Chairman, the majority of those positions were vacant positions already. Whilst it might seem a large number, the positions were already vacant. As the Commissioner said in relation to the number of positions, we are looking at already vacant positions throughout the QPS first.

Mr BYRNE: Minister, page 25 of the QPS SDS states that Queensland Health provides services to the Queensland Police Service. Can the minister outline the role the John Tonge Centre and the Forensic and Scientific Services for investigations and prosecutions? Does the minister stand by the statements made by the spokesperson for health, Minister Springborg, that the cuts to that centre and the Forensic and Scientific Services would not affect police forensic services?

Mr DEMPSEY: I will answer the second part of the question first, in relation to the health minister. I have had conversations with the health minister in relation to this particular issue. He reassured me that the health department would continue to meet those expectations. I also have full confidence that the John Tonge Centre and the QPS will work together to make sure that those high standards are maintained.

I remember attending my first autopsy at the John Tonge Centre, which happened to be of a crocodile. It was interesting to see how professional people are able to extract items from a crocodile. They maintain a high standard of professionalism in what is a very hard task. As police minister I know that the staff of the John Tonge Centre continue to work in those conditions and continue to exhibit great professionalism. They certainly have to have a particular interest in those areas of science and a passion for the work that they do. We certainly do appreciate their efforts.

The QPS has an effective and efficient working relationship with Queensland Health Forensic and Scientific Services and the John Tonge Centre. The Queensland Health FSS provides a range of services to the QPS, including DNA analysis, drug analysis, drug and alcohol testing and clandestine laboratory analysis and pathology, which has been an area of particular interest for me over the years. We have seen an increase in drug labs in a number of different communities throughout the state and an increase in the ease with which people are able to facilitate the production of certain types of drugs.

I understand the acting director of the John Tonge Centre has confirmed that changes within their laboratories will not affect the provision of essential services to support police investigations. I am not aware of any significant delays in the provision of services provided by the John Tonge Centre through Queensland Health Forensic and Scientific Services. Analytical results are generally provided within the time needed to support the investigation and the justice system. DNA testing is by far the biggest service provided by the John Tonge Centre to the QPS. In 2008 the QPS instigated the DNA improvement strategy, which is all part of the QPS keeping up to date with modern technology and modern police roles, and also looking at ways to facilitate things for the other states as well. As we have said, criminals do not have boundaries. We have to ensure that we work with everyone in that regard.

The standard of the John Tonge Centre is well known. In 2010, the DNA improvement strategy won a number of awards, including a silver award in the Prime Minister's awards for excellence. That shows the outstanding contribution that it has made there. Current figures indicate that, on average, the result of a DNA analysis is available within 21 days. However, we have had a number of highly identifiable investigations and obviously police can request a certain expediency in relation to their investigations, whether it be analysis of DNA or other samples by the John Tonge Centre. Commissioner, would you like to comment in relation to the excellent work of the John Tonge Centre?

Commissioner Atkinson: We have a good relationship. I am quite proud of our own forensic people and it is a good relationship with the John Tonge Centre. As the minister implied, apart from all of the other services the John Tonge Centre provides, DNA analysis is the one that literally exploded in the past five to 10 years. In that time, the ability of police to capture DNA samples from crime scenes has improved markedly and the ability of forensic scientists to analyse those samples has improved dramatically as well. The scope for DNA across-the-board, whether it is from a crime scene or it is the ability to analyse it, has increased exponentially. It is quite remarkable really in terms of what is currently on the horizon. One of things that is currently on the horizon for DNA, potentially, is what is called familial DNA. It would be possible to say that this DNA sample is not the person who is on record, but it does belong to the son, brother or father of the person. The potentiality for DNA, and this is subject to legislation and policy of course, is still expanding.

Mr WATTS: Minister, on page 3 of the SDS there is a list of key challenges and strategic risks facing Queensland. An area that I am particularly interested in, and I am sure the committee would like to hear from you about, is what the Queensland government is doing in relation to drug related crime.

Mr DEMPSEY: Obviously I understand the member's interest in this particular area. The scourge of drugs on any member's community and how police address it is a serious matter. As darkness comes on any community and the offenders come out, we have to make sure that people can sleep safe in their beds knowing that we have an effective police service that can alleviate not only fear but also the scourge of drug offenders. The QPS commits significant resources and effort towards targeting criminals involved in serious drug crime. Investigations into localised drug crime are conducted within regions and districts by local people. I think that comes back to what we are saying about having effective Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers groups within communities. That is very important, because the police are only as good as the information they receive.

Significant drug crime investigations at a state, national and international level are led by the State Drug Investigation Unit. Investigations draw on intelligence from a range of resources, including the chemical and pharmaceutical industries and other law enforcement agencies. I would like to comment on the advances in the interaction with the pharmaceutical industry and the way it has taken a coordinated approach with us in terms of information gathering and focusing on the safety of particular drugs within pharmacies, which is very important. The State Drug Investigation Unit investigates drug crime in partnership with the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, the Crime and Misconduct Commission and the Australian Crime Commission. As I have said before, it is very important to have that connection and interaction, because we have an ever-changing environment in relation to drugs and the type of drugs that are used.

A recent 2011-12 joint operation resulted in the arrest of a number of drug traffickers involved in importing into Australia kilograms of cocaine from Brazil. That occurred in Bundaberg, although obviously that is not a reflection on the community. People will go to extraordinary lengths to do this. It is vital to target the production and manufacturing of illicit drugs to reduce their availability within the community. The State Drug Investigation Unit Illicit Laboratory Investigation Team is responsible for processing all illegal drug laboratories in Queensland. In 2011-12, 379 clandestine illicit drug laboratories were detected and seized, compared to 293 in 2010-11. That was great work by the Queensland Police Service, but it shows how desperate are the people involved in the drug trade. The increase in the number of clandestine illicit drug lab detections is due to increasing staff awareness as a result of training, the wider adoption of Project STOP, greater community awareness, the introduction of telephone interceptions, tougher legislative controls and close partnerships with law enforcement agencies and industry groups. Those types of initiatives have greatly enhanced the capacity of the police to identify and target drug producers.

A good example of that was a program run by the Queensland Police Service, I am not sure of the exact date but it was approximately seven or eight years. It targeted hotel and motel owners, as people were using their facilities to set up small drug labs. By educating hotel and motel owners about things such as the associated smells, sounds and increases in electricity use, we were able to establish trigger points to alert police and get to the offenders as quickly as possible. Even within the general community, we can look at the rubbish that is left out the front of premises, even private residences, to see if it contains certain tablet packets and so forth. We are able to identify those people and get the drug agencies and the police onto them.

Project STOP was another great program. It targeted pseudoephedrine, which is a key ingredient in the manufacture of illicit drugs. Criminals try to purchase legal drugs containing pseudoephedrine from multiple chemist shops to create a stockpile, as we have mentioned previously. The Queensland Police Service and the Queensland Pharmacy Guild have worked to address that through Project STOP. It is an invaluable program and a great effort from the pharmacies. The names of people buying legal drugs containing pseudoephedrine are now recorded on a database and police can identify and track people making multiple purchases. Project STOP is highly effective and has been adopted nationally. Obviously, criminals will try other ways to get around this. They will try to buy scripts off people in the street and so on, but Project STOP does make it harder for the illegal traders.

To make it tougher to manufacture illegal drugs, in 2010 the Australian government introduced a licensing system for the lawful possession of pill or tablet presses. The Australian Customs and Border Protection Service assesses the suitability of applicants to import a pill press into Australia, in consultation with the relevant state law enforcement agencies. Certainly we are seeing the benefits of making that process very much harder.

The QPS Dog Squad provides special drug detection support for operational police across the state. They have 10 staff. I know their dedication towards that special area is unique. It is attached to the Brisbane Dog Squad, but supports operational police across the state. It has increased its searches to include heavy vehicles, vehicles travelling in major events and entertainment precincts. Members will have seen images on the TV showing how the officers go about their job. As the commissioner would know from his friendship towards certain dogs at the academy on induction parades, they are not always the happiest of animals and can cause concerns at any given time. However, the drug dogs and their handlers certainly go about their jobs in a very professional way that alleviates a lot of concerns, particularly for someone who has an animal close to them and inspecting them. That is a great credit to the Dog Squad and the Police Service. The number of searches has increased and we are getting significant results.

We mentioned before the Major and Organised Crime Squad. A new squad will be established on the Gold Coast, which will contribute to the fight against serious drugs. An additional 10 officers will be appointed, making a total of 30 officers. I understand that they have not filled the extra 10 positions. When I was talking to officers of that squad it was highlighted that the average police officer does not go into that squad. They want the best of the best. They will ensure that they get the right people so that this specialised unit gets results and works as a team. We all know what it is like in special units. This is a special unit that is achieving results. It is getting the highly motivated people.

The government is looking to introduce tougher sentences and unexplained wealth provisions. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General is developing amendments to toughen sentencing laws for drug offenders who target children. It is seeking to make drug traffickers serve at least 80 per cent of their sentences before they are eligible for parole. We will introduce new unexplained wealth laws and drug trafficking declarations to target the ill-gotten gains of criminals. As well we will work on the national strategy and regulations. We continue to work with SCPEM to make sure we get on to drug offenders who do not know boundaries. The QPS is on a number of state and national groups, including the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs, the precursor advisory group and the independent working group in relation to the Drugs Misuse Act and regulations.

Drugs are becoming so scientifically adapted. We have seen in other countries—and this is what we have to be mindful of—that a number of the components of these new drugs are legal. We have to make sure that we keep ahead of that. I know the New Zealand parliament puts the onus of proof on the person. I have had a number of conversations with the AG in relation to that particular provision which is operating well in New Zealand. I am not fully au fait with it, but how it basically works is that if you have a new drug and it is not on the drug schedule or listed in the health acts or the food legislation of the country then it is seen as an illicit drug. The individual then has the onus to prove that it is not an illicit drug. They are achieving magnificent results with that.

The way the drug trade is developing across the world we are constantly catching up with what is coming onto the market. We are looking at ways to get ahead of that problem and to have legislation in place so that no matter what this element of society come up with we have legislation that protects the most vulnerable in our society.

I know the commissioner is very passionate about the drug area and particularly catching offenders. Commissioner, would you like to comment?

Commissioner Atkinson: Thank you, Minister. There is little that I could add to what you have said. It is certainly a very significant issue for us and remains so and will continue to be so in the future. It is not just the drug trade itself that is a problem it is the related crime as well—the break and enters and robberies. The incidences of violence are generally related to the non-payment of a drug debt. A great deal of crime is related to illegal drug activity as well.

I endorse the minister's comments about synthetic drugs and how the chemical composition of synthetic drugs can quickly be altered. There is a challenge for legislation, as the minister indicated, in dealing with that. We certainly need a law enforcement approach, but beyond a law enforcement approach we need national and international cooperation. I believe we have that to a very high standard.

We need an approach, in my humble view, that includes education for young people. We need a health approach in terms of minimising harm. As the minister alluded to, we need an economic approach. That is one that allows us or some authority to take away the obvious profits of people involved in drug dealing at a higher level. Unless there was some specific question, there is nothing further I can say at this time.

CHAIR: Minister, what is your department doing about graffiti? You have established the graffiti task force. What is the involvement of Queensland Rail in this?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the chairman for the question in relation to graffiti. No matter what community you are in, if you see any form of graffiti it does not send a positive message about that community. Some people in the community may look at the artistic side of it—and I am sure there is that side to it when it is not done illegally—but we have to make sure that graffiti offences are dealt with in a timely manner and, as the commissioner just alluded to, that there is education for young offenders.

The QPS addresses graffiti through the work of local police, special operations by divisional police and district based tactical crime squads—particularly the railway squad in the south-east corner. Intelligence officers in police districts are also monitoring graffiti within their areas. Intelligence is used to initiate patrols targeting identified problem areas. Profiles of suspected and known graffiti offenders are also produced and circulated to patrol crews. We see certain tags that people are using throughout communities. That is part of the intelligence gathering. We are seeing a greater movement of these individuals across the state.

Tactical crime squads provide investigative and operational support in their police districts, with a particular emphasis on drug and property related crime. They supplement criminal investigation and general duties policing and conduct operations targeting hot spots or issues of local concern.

The QPS railway squad provides a high-profile uniform presence on the Citytrain railway network to enhance the safety of all users. The 64 police officers working in the squad also undertake a proactive, supporting and coordinating role to ensure people's safety whilst travelling and working on the rail network. I commend the officers who work on that network. I was recently down at their new facility at Robina. The computer intelligence gathering functions they have there will not only assist with stopping graffiti but offences across-the-board. They will be able to track offenders or suspects through identification of shoes, hats and so forth. There are also four civilian staff in the railway squad who support front-line police by performing administrative, intelligence and police liaison roles.

The railway squad works in partnership with Queensland Rail in targeting approaches to stop graffiti, including through the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design program. That is a great initiative that works well. Local councils appreciate that. If they can design their area according to the guidelines it helps. If they are able to get CCTV in it is an advantage. If with modern design techniques we are able to make antisocial behaviour and the people committing it uncomfortable I think it is great. It is great for local councils and planners to have that type of unit from which they can gather information and advice in their initial stages of developing their community.

The QPS administers the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design program and offers training to local councils and community groups in ways to reduce crime and change the urban environment. That particularly relates to the graffiti offences that you alluded to, Mr Chairman. It also conducts education programs and community awareness sessions that are delivered by its crime prevention officers and school based officers. I get back to the importance of adopt-a-cop and community beat officers. We are taking the approach of having more police officers on the beat and more police officers in tune with the community and are releasing them from behind desks. We are maintaining the highest standard of accountability, but we are freeing them up from a lot of processes and paperwork so they get out and meet the expectations that the community has of them.

In May 2012 the QPS and the Brisbane City Council co-hosted the graffiti prevention conference in Brisbane. Representatives from many agencies attended and the theme was 'Writings on the wall'. Topics included graffiti investigation, innovative responses and getting preventative strategies in place.

During the 2012 the task force against graffiti offenders charged 71 offenders with 3,187 offences. It just shows the impact that one person can have across many communities. Obviously it took a lot of policing work to achieve that result. It certainly sends a clear message. In some ways it restores for many people out there who see graffiti, particularly the more mature members of the community, confidence in the young people in their community that it is not a large number of young people doing this, it is a small group. Often it is young adults.

The government and the Brisbane City Council expanded their partnership to tackle graffiti on the city's vandalised rail corridors in August this year. Joint funding of \$500,000 was provided to include Queensland Rail in the task force against graffiti. The new partnership means greater cooperation between the three organisations when it comes to graffiti removal and enforcement. This includes a greater focus on removing graffiti from properties backing onto rail corridors and not just railway lines and stations. We need to be able to have a coordinated approach and not a small patch approach to this. We need a wider approach to this and target other businesses in those corridors. That is very important. I know when I worked in the Police Service myself there was the initiative in relation to targeting and liaising with businesses in terms of the sale of spray paints in communities and trying to identify anybody who might be getting excessive amounts of spray paint.

Commissioner Atkinson: I have only two brief comments. Firstly, there is nothing that has been raised today that is not important. But the broken windows still holds good. That is that if there is graffiti, that leads to a broken window and then there is that gradual deterioration in a community. The other one is, and again this is a personal view, that in some quarters there is a glamorised notion that really this is just street art and that it is not a crime. That is not my view. It is vandalism and it is a crime and we should treat it that way and we should treat the people who engage in it that way.

Mr WELLINGTON: Can I just start by wishing Commissioner Atkinson all the best for his retirement. I think he might have a challenge in coping with life. Your role at the moment is pretty busy. I know members of the service on the Sunshine Coast and their families hold you in very high regard and certainly appreciate the effort that you go to when you ring them late at night to share issues with them. The greater community that I am aware of are also very appreciative of the efforts that you have gone to over and above the call of duty. We wish you all the best.

Incoming commissioner, I wish you all the best in the challenging time ahead. Minister, I think every estimates hearing is different. I think you are setting a record when it comes to how you can find as much information as possible to make sure your answer is relevant. I think history might show that you are setting some records in how long it takes to answer a question.

You talk about the provision of additional police officers. Are you able to clarify how many of those new police officers will be able to be allocated to the Sunshine Coast area? When I refer to the Sunshine Coast area, my definition is effectively Caloundra to Noosa, not including Redcliffe and some of those areas.

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. I certainly understand the importance of safety and I am very passionate as a minister about this particular portfolio and anything to do with safety in Queensland. As the member for Nicklin obviously understands, with such a lovely electorate, people live there because of the safety aspects. Safety is an important area for me as the minister because it brings a lot of other benefits. In relation to the allocation of officers, not only as they come through the academy but also transfers and other allocations made throughout the whole state, that is a particular operational matter and I would like to refer that to the commissioner.

Commissioner Atkinson: Thank you for the question. Of the 300 additional police officers in this financial year, 100 have already been preallocated to the south-east region. We have eight regions in the state. The south-east region takes in three districts—Logan, Coomera and the Gold Coast. So 100 have been preallocated there. Ten have been preallocated to State Crime Operations Command in the areas of major crime, outlaw motorcycle gangs and such matters. Fifteen of course, as has been discussed here earlier this evening, have been allocated in terms of school based police officers. On my maths that is 125, which leaves 175.

The vast majority of those 175 additional officers this financial year will go to operational policing in the regions and districts. We are currently examining the best and fairest distribution of those 175 police across the state. I can give you an undertaking that some of those 175 will definitely be extra positions for the broader Sunshine Coast, as you described it, sir, but I cannot give you the precise number. The commissioner designate and myself and our HR director are in discussion about that at the moment. The announcements for that I hope will be made in the near future.

Mr WELLINGTON: You referred to transfers and vacancies. One of the problems that I have experienced is how long it takes to fill a vacancy with the process that you have to go through—the applications and the hearings. Minister or Commissioner, are you planning to try to streamline or speed up the filling of vacancies?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. The member for Nicklin obviously from past experience knows the complexities of the transfer and promotions system. I believe that having another 1,100 new police officers in the Queensland Police Service will alleviate a lot of those concerns. The sheer volume will create greater, for want of a better word, variety and options for police officers. Anything to do with where those positions are is for the commissioner. The government steps aside from that. That is an operational matter. As far as transfers and promotions are concerned, it is complex. It is also about making sure that we address the concerns of the individual as well as the organisation. That is very important. Would the commissioner like to add anything?

Commissioner Atkinson: Interestingly the most popular area in the state is your area on the Sunshine Coast, sir. We have little trouble getting people wanting to go there. I think it is a fair question and the answer is that the current system could definitely be improved. Within the current system though people do have appeal rights so that if someone is, for example, promoted to the position of senior sergeant in charge of Nambour unsuccessful applicants have the right to appeal against that decision of the selection panel. That can hold the process up. Sometimes the personal circumstances of individuals can delay their movement on transfer. But I do think there is scope to improve the current system and they are matters that I am sure the commissioner designate will pursue.

Mr WELLINGTON: We have heard earlier this evening about the new helicopters that will be available for South-East Queensland. Can I ask for clarification as to what you anticipate will be the criteria that need to be met for one of those helicopters to be available to support our police services on the Sunshine Coast? And again I refer to the Caloundra to Noosa geographical area.

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. If there is crime or more serious crime committed on the border of those areas, whether it be the Sunshine Coast or your particular area, common-sense prevails that the helicopter attached to South-East Queensland will be available to assist with that particular offence or particular development, whether it be a search or a crime scene and so forth. It is very similar to the Gold Coast helicopter. It has had to go slightly outside the boundaries from a regional policing perspective to facilitate that. Commissioner, would you like to comment?

Commissioner Atkinson: I think it is probably unlikely that the helicopter currently based on the Gold Coast would frequently be used on the Sunshine Coast. But once the Brisbane helicopter is established it is not very far particularly to the southern end of the Sunshine Coast. To my mind the criteria would broadly be major planned events where the use of a helicopter would assist in the safe conduct of a major planned event, searches for missing people and major criminal operations. Those three would probably be broadly the criteria that would be determined in terms of whether the helicopter was utilised on the Sunshine Coast.

Mr WELLINGTON: I have a further question in relation to the police officers attached to our schools that you touched on earlier—and thank you for recognising the calls for a police officer to be attached to Nambour State High School. Minister, in relation to the support services that that officer will require, is it anticipated that the officer will work from, say, the Nambour Police Station or will the officer

work from the school? Will the school be required to provide accommodation, a computer, a phone? Are there any support facilities that the school will have to provide? I do not have a problem with that, but it is just a matter of clarifying that.

Mr DEMPSEY: From an operational stance, I will throw that straight to the commissioner. From my own experience, working with school based police officers over time, the majority of time it is about turning up at the school and having that commitment to the school. That is their sole operation. I would like to hand over to the commissioner.

Commissioner Atkinson: The process regardless of where it is is that the school based police officer is generally attached to the local CPIU, Child Protection Investigation Unit, which was formerly known as the Juvenile Aid Bureau. In this case the closest station would be Nambour and the officer would be based there and work at the school. We would only have an expectation that the education department would provide some accommodation. One of the key roles of course of school based police officers is to talk and engage with the children at the school. So it is about having the opportunity to do that and requiring some basic accommodation. I hope that answers the question.

Mr WELLINGTON: Again, to use Nambour school as an example, is it anticipated that the officer will be exclusive to Nambour State High School and Nambour State School or will he be available to the neighbouring Burnside State High School and Burnside State School? Do you have that sort of detail?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. The commissioner will be able to answer that. As previously stated, where there is not a school based police officer we are putting an effort into having a designated person within the station attached to or taking responsibility for a particular school community.

Commissioner Atkinson: Primarily it would be Nambour State High School. There would be no reason why the officer, whoever that turns out to be—and again I would hope there would be no difficulty attracting someone to a place like Nambour—could not help out in other schools if there was a request and agreement to do that. Certainly, as you are well aware, there is the Adopt-a-Cop program for primary schools particularly which we think has also been very successful.

Mr WELLINGTON: Is it anticipated that that position would be advertised so that position would be filled by a specific officer and would not just be a person from the Nambour Police Station? Will there be a vacancy in the gazette?

Commissioner Atkinson: Yes. It is a competitive position, so it is advertised. That process is underway at the moment. As was mentioned earlier, the goal is to have that position filled and occupied and operational from the beginning of the 2013 school year.

Mr DEMPSEY: From my own experience, considering the complexities within the QPS, those roles are normally filled in a timely manner. If there is any particular reason it would not be, I am sure the commissioner designate will be able to make sure that that role is filled in a timely manner.

Mr WELLINGTON: In your Service Delivery Statement you referred to the success of fixed speed cameras. And on behalf of my community I thank you for the movement on the fixed speed camera on the Nambour Connection Road at the intersection at the entrance to Woombye. We are looking forward to when that camera starts operating. Hopefully the traffic will slow down and, if not, drivers will be appropriately fined.

In relation to the two fixed speed cameras located on the highway between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast, there is no doubt that traffic has slowed down in the years I have been driving on that road. Minister or Commissioner, are there any plans for additional fixed speed cameras on the highway, perhaps coming from the Sunshine Coast to Brisbane? What I am specifically referring to is where you have a camera at one spot and a camera at another spot and you calculate the speed of the vehicle between the two designations?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. On the issue of speed cameras, we all understand that they do save lives and they do reduce the seriousness of accidents. Having driven through those areas myself a number of times, I see the instant change in people's behaviours. It really frustrates me that people have to sometimes have advertising after advertising and a fixed camera in place before they will actually change their attitudes towards driving and then you will see people revert to using their own discretion after those cameras. But those cameras certainly are effective.

It is not just about having the camera in place; it does send a very serious message to all road users about their behaviour on the road and how important it is to make sure you respect all other road users. There is the old saying that a licence is a privilege not a right, and we as a government want to make sure that people respect that. That will come through with our anti-hooning legislation, which has passed cabinet and will be introduced into parliament shortly. That is about making people more responsible for their actions but also about sending a clear message that if you continue to affect other members of the community by your antisocial behaviour when it comes to driving it will not be acceptable. We will be looking at ways to ensure that communities are safe in relation to people and their antisocial driving behaviour.

In relation to speed cameras—and I mention the red light cameras as well—the QPS manages the Camera Detected Offence Program in Queensland. It includes both of those areas. When an offence is detected a photo is taken and it proceeds to the QPS Traffic Camera Office in Brisbane and an infringement notice is generated. Fines are then paid within the set period and received by the Department of Transport and Main Roads. If the fine is not paid then it goes off to SPER, as we all know. The camera devices certainly are working.

Research shows that one in every five road fatalities is speed related. We talk about the fatal four—speed, seatbelts, fatigue and drink/drug driving. We are currently organising a brief in relation to inattention as well, because we have seen the increase of mobile phone use and other distractions in modern vehicles. Gone are the days when you used to wind the window down to get air conditioning. There are a lot of other distractions in vehicles. We are possibly looking at a fatal five or including inattention in the fatal four, but that will be done in consultation with all parties. In relation to the particular question about fixed speed cameras, I will ask the commissioner to comment.

Commissioner Atkinson: In terms of fixed speed cameras, there are no immediate plans to increase the numbers on that particular stretch of roadway, but of course that is kept under review on an annual basis and that situation may change in the future. As you are well aware, the fixed speed cameras are complemented by traffic patrols generally and mobile, visible and covert speed cameras. Can I thank you for your support for the speed camera program because, in my view—and I am happy to provide what I think would be evidence of it—they unarguably have helped to dramatically reduce the road toll in Queensland.

CHAIR: I now call the member for Rockhampton.

Mr BYRNE: Minister, I want to talk about the 1,100 new recruits and the issues associated with entry standards. RTI documents dated 26 March 2010 outline conditions recommended by the executive director, Patsy Jones, about younger recruits for the QPS. The document describes it as, 'Vital that the QPS maintains the current minimum tertiary educational requirements for all participants and further recommends that the curriculum of the initial service program be expanded and modernised to reflect contemporary policing situations that younger police officers may find difficult.' Minister, I have already spoken about the previous comments made by the shadow at the last estimates and on top of that there is the professional opinion of the executive director. I am concerned about why this advice and these sorts of opinions are being ignored. Will it necessarily lead to an increased risk to public safety or an increased possibility of corruption long term if this course matures with the circumstances and standards as indicated?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. Through you, Mr Chair, and as alluded to in the previous questions and answers, I will pass to the commissioner shortly. Whilst I do not have the exact comments Ms Patsy Jones made about that particular issue, I understand her commitment to recruiting, and I understand the enthusiasm, the passion, the dedication and the expert knowledge she has in relation to recruiting. I can reassure you about the aspects of recruiting that are currently taking place. You should bear in mind that the previous government introduced I think the 28-week program we currently have; that was introduced prior to this government. The training and the acknowledgement of that was identified as being necessary so as to meet modern policing standards. As the commissioner previously alluded to, it is certainly competitive for the academy throughout the whole of the state. Before going on further, I will ask the commissioner to comment.

Commissioner Atkinson: Thank you, Minister. I obviously do not have that particular document or that extract from it in front of me. But the executive director of our human resource management, Patsy Jones, is a highly competent person and she is currently leading and managing the recruiting program that has evolved to the point where it is now. Essentially, that has evolved to the point where we believe that, whilst tertiary qualifications are good to have and are desirable and we are strongly supportive of them, we should not exclude someone from joining the police department if they have the psychological, ethical and potential intellectual capability to successfully complete the training program and go on and become a good police officer. We believe we should cast the net as wide as possible and we should not exclude people who might have wonderful life experience but not necessarily a tertiary qualification. That is the point we are at currently.

I am very supportive of that. I am very confident that the range of testing and assessment that is in place before someone starts on their first day at the police academy is sufficient to ensure that we are not going to basically recruit people who are vulnerable in terms of not meeting the standards and who let us down. But, again, it is not a perfect world and, whether you have tertiary qualifications or not, there are some from year to year who will fail and who will leave the organisation.

Mr BYRNE: Commissioner, I would like to follow on with a couple of things that were raised there.

Mr DEMPSEY: Just before moving on, and I am sorry to interrupt, but as I said there before, it went from 30 weeks to 25 weeks and I want to make sure that is fine.

Mr BYRNE: I will come back to that one in a moment about what happened during the last regime, but let us just say that I have a slightly different view about that process and who knew what about what happened. I will come back to that one if I get a chance.

I am more interested in this. You say you have an overwhelming response. I understand that recruits are potentially rated through your selection process, so they are either A, B, C or D or whatever point you go down to. Am I accurate in saying that when you look at someone who is coming into the Police Service as a recruit they are rated 'Prime candidate', and that would be an A grade I assume, then the rest are B and then C with one of the latter ones being aligned with 'Not acceptable', whether that is an E or an F or so forth? What sort of span, particularly correlated to ages, are you receiving in your recruit profiles? Yes, you probably have a lot of people who want to be police officers, but the point is what is the quality of them and what is the age of them. I understand modern selection testing, I understand psychometrics and I understand all of those other pieces, but that is not the question here. What is the reality on the ground? How many C-rated candidates are you getting? I would imagine that is the bare minimum that is selected. What age group are they? What we pick up in the Twitterverse and so forth is that your very candidates are out there saying, 'I'm a C-grader and a whole mass of us are going to the academy.'

Can you give me any sense of what the distribution of talent is? How many premium A-grade recruits are there, particularly over the last two courses since you started to run this 25-week package? How many As? What age are they? How many Bs? What age are they? What is the demographic? If you can give me that sort of detail, I would have much more confidence in what you are suggesting.

Commissioner Atkinson: I cannot give you that now of course.

Mr BYRNE: It is okay. You can take it on notice.

Commissioner Atkinson: I will come back to you with what information we are able to provide. It is true to say that we have had a broad and rudimentary rating scheme where there is that alphabetical classification of A, B and C, and we have never gone below a C. Our goal is to have as many As and Bs as possible. The vast majority of people who start as a police recruit are generally in that A and B category, but there is always a balance in this. As I mentioned earlier, and it is true, recruitment and retention are up there with our biggest challenges. When our attrition rate was five per cent, we were looking at recruiting 800 additional people a year and there is a mix of ways we go about that. The primary way is through the approximately six-month academy program which is currently being trialled, in terms of there being some modest reduction in the number of weeks, which has been discussed momentarily.

Could I mention the other ways. We are happy to take people back into the organisation who have left us, and we encourage people who have left us and who we would like back to return. We tailor and custom design a program to them. So if they have been out for six months, the re-entry program might be a fortnight. If they have been out for a year, it could be a month. So we will tailor and custom design for those people. As the minister mentioned earlier, we are re-introducing the program of three-months training for interstate police who want to come to Queensland. The final one we have is a 12-month program for young people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander extraction. We actually train them for six months to enable them to get to the point where they are able to start the six-month academy program. That is called the Justice Entry Program.

Fortunately, our attrition rate has dropped so we will not be needing to recruit 800 people. It may be 750; it may even get down to 700. But it is still a huge demand and we are fortunate to have the two academies in both Brisbane and Townsville to do that. I would have to take the specific question about the age profile and the A, B, C aspect on notice and endeavour to get back to you.

Mr BYRNE: That is fine. You mentioned something else there—the PACE Program that has been re-introduced. I notice out of estimates last year or a couple of estimates ago I think it was you who said that the QPS has moved away from the PACE Program. I also understand that, when that move away from the PACE Program occurred, a cost-benefit analysis was done within the QPS and it clearly indicated that it was a poor return on investment and that was one of the reasons you were stepping away from PACE. We have noted, as everyone else has, that the PACE Program has been reactivated and it is visible through the QPS website. I suppose naturally my concern is that two or three years ago or in 2008 you essentially stopped doing it but now we get the impression you are out there prepared to do anything to reach this 1,100, or am I overplaying this in some way?

Commissioner Atkinson: No, we would not do anything. It is a very good question and it is not something we are very firm about. We would rather go back to the government and say that we are 10 short than accept 10 people who are not acceptable but I do not think that will happen. Things evolve of course, and this is my take on the program for interstate officers. When we first introduced that some years ago, without question, some of the people we got in that program were people who, with the wisdom of hindsight, we would have been better off not employing. But what has happened nationally over the last decade or so is that the standards have lifted and just about every police department has been through a Fitzgerald type inquiry. In some cases, some of the people who are applying to join from interstate are actually Queenslanders who left here and joined other police departments interstate and

want to come home. I think if we are cautious when we assess those officers in looking at their history in those interstate jurisdictions, particularly their complaint history, and the quality of the assessment process we put them through—and I mentioned the battery of psychological testing and so forth, and in general terms we recruit younger people from interstate—then I think we will be in a safe place to reintroduce that program.

Mr BYRNE: Mr Chair, if you do not mind I have two more quick ones.

CHAIR: One more.

Mr BYRNE: Okay, one more. I will try to cut to the chase rather than do the great preamble. I want to go to the 1,100 new recruits and the 200 being transferred from behind desks. We have got the impression from some parties that some of those PACE officers are going to be some sort of cross-out into being covered off in your 200 behind-desk number who are going to go into the field. The straight-up issue is that I want an assurance that the 200 are going to come from genuine behind-desk officers and will not be some sort of trade-off or game-playing with these PACE officers who may be coming in.

Commissioner Atkinson: No, it would not be a trade-off. But if, for example, hypothetically one of those people who are described as holding a behind-desk position or an office position retire at 60 years of age and we decide that that position is one that can be included in the 50 for that year—and it is 50 a year over the next four years—then it will not be that officer who will go from a desk to an operational role, because they have retired, but it will be that we will recruit someone to go into that additional operational role.

Mr BYRNE: You are not going to double count them?

Commissioner Atkinson: No.

Mr BYRNE: You have a PACE officer who goes into a vacant position and that vacant position then transfers to a front-line position. Is that the deal?

Commissioner Atkinson: No, maybe I am not being as clear as I should be. The 50 that will go from behind desks each year to operational positions may not always be the people who were behind the desk. If the person who was behind the desk retires at 60 years of age, that then frees up that position and that position can be reallocated from a desk position to an operational position. But if that happens, then it is quite possible that that position will be filled by someone who has come through the academy. I hope that makes sense.

Mr BYRNE: It does.

Commissioner Atkinson: Certainly there is a commitment in terms of those 200—

Mr BYRNE: Just one final—

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Rockhampton. Minister, I have a personal question regarding the electorate of Condamine. In relation to prisoner work camps, the prisoners at Westbrook have been very successful with the Jondaryan Woolshed—many thousands of hours have been freely given—and also the steam train museum. As you are aware, we have suggested some work camps be put back into that facility. The lock-up facility is still at Westbrook. With the council boundary realignment, it would be the perfect place to run a couple of camps. Then you would not have to put a camp in Oakey, Pittsworth or west of Toowoomba where a community would have to accept a brand new camp. The facility is already accepted here. How far have you looked into that situation?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. Having met with the member previously about the Jondaryan shed, it is very important to ensure that we have a process that meets all community expectations and that, particularly with regard to the Jondaryan shed, its significance and importance to the community is recognised. I will make the commitment to continue to work with the Jondaryan community to alleviate their concerns. I will also liaise with the mayor of the local government, Mayor Anthony. It is progressing well. We have to make sure that any issues regarding growth in the electorate of Condamine are matched with the resources that it most valuably needs. Commissioner, would you like to comment?

Commissioner Atkinson: I think there is little I could add to that. It is not just in your electorate; I know from my colleagues across the state that there is quite a positive view of the work camps, particularly for smaller councils, in terms of the benefit they bring.

CHAIR: Thank you. I now call the member for Yeerongpilly.

Mr JUDGE: Under the Safer Streets Crime Action Plan, the government has pledged to break the cycle of youth crime and divert young offenders from the criminal justice system. Will you please explain to the committee how Project Booyah fits into this approach?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. The member for Yeerongpilly certainly knows about the positive aspects of interaction between the police and young people. I know he is very passionate about his own community. He has shown me a number of different facilities that are world-class. Having worked in PCYCs towards the end of my policing career, I certainly know the importance

of the interaction between police and young people and also the building of good citizenship within those communities. Project Booyah is obviously a joint initiative operating in the Coomera Police District. It involves the Queensland Police Service; the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disabilities Services—Nerang Child Safety—and the Nerang Police Citizens Youth Club, or PCYC. I know Sergeant Scott Muldoon does a fantastic job but he also has a fantastic committee. That is what most community organisations revolve around—a great band of volunteers who come together at times to make their communities better, and the PCYCs certainly do that.

The project aims to engage selected youth aged 13 to 17 years of age who are at risk of criminal activity, antisocial behaviour, self-harm or substance abuse or who are regularly exposed to these. The focus is on empowering young people to change their behaviours by diverting them from the criminal justice system. You can see that this is what this government is about. This is about taking a whole-of-government approach to these issues. It is great to see a number of departments working together.

Project Booyah started in March 2012 and has so far been run two times. It is conducted over six months and is implemented in three phases. The three phases involve participation in the wilderness adventure therapy base camp, which is very important. I heard comments from the previous department about boot camps. The definition of boot camps is not as the term may suggest. It is about ensuring we take a whole-of-government approach to the value of young people and all the different aspects of those young people. You have to make sure you include the family and other support mechanisms. As we build young people's confidence it is very important that we have those other support systems in place.

The second phase of Project Booyah is held at the PCYC at Nerang, which has a number of different activities. It sees the participants involved in education and training activities. This includes youth studying to obtain formal education and vocational studies in hospitality or construction, possibly receiving a certificate 1 qualification on successful completion of this course. That is very important. As I said before, where people come into areas from other nations or cultures, they can rightfully have a negative disposition towards authority such as police. This is looking at ways to bring down those barriers. I know this from my own personal experience when I was at Carindale Police Citizens Youth Club for a while. I had a group of individuals from the Yugoslavian area who were very distrusting of authority. It was not until we were able to go in plain clothes and build up trust that they realised I was a police officer and we could then actually build on that trust. When we are talking about young people and generational issues, it is important that we take into account all aspects to put those concerns at ease and still have successful outcomes. That is important. It is all right having programs, but we have to have programs that have outcomes.

The final phase of the project is a graduation ceremony including acknowledgement of those who have achieved formal qualifications. A career expo and guidance advice is also provided to link participants to future workforce opportunities and explore their prospects. We all know that, besides education, getting someone into a particular vocation is very important. The focus of the project is to help the young people deliver the necessary life skills to make sound decisions that are respectful of themselves and of others. A total of 23 participants have completed the program with 15 of those young people obtaining qualifications in the hospitality and construction industries. The next group of 20 young people have commenced the education component of their course and are due for graduation from the program in December 2012.

Project Booyah has been acknowledged for its work in helping young people turn their lives around by winning the Youth Participation Award in the Queensland 2012 Child Protection Awards. I would particularly like to thank all of the people involved in that process. I know the member for Yeerongpilly has a passion for helping young people within his community and understands the complexities of young people heading towards crime, sometimes not due to their own choices. It may be because of family or other issues in their environment. I have certainly seen the positives myself when those young people are helped to turn their lives around and become great citizens—even members of parliament. It is a great project. I thank the member for his interest.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. That just about concludes our session. I say a special thankyou to you and your staff. Commissioner, we do wish you all the best. The committee will now break for dinner. The hearing will resume at 7 pm with continued consideration of the proposed expenditure for the relevant organisational units within the Corrective Services and Emergency Services portfolio of the Minister for Police and Community Safety.

Mr DEMPSEY: Thank you. Before concluding this particular part of the evening, whilst I have previously acknowledged the fantastic commitment of the commissioner over 44 years, 12 years as the Commissioner of Police, I would again like to thank him on behalf of the people of Queensland. I do that particularly in relation to his appearance at this estimates committee, which is a proceeding of the parliament of Queensland. I say thank you for that. I wish you well with Glenda and I wish you many years of happiness. I hope you enjoy at least one sleep-in. You certainly deserve it after 44 years and you will certainly be missed.

It would be remiss of me if I did not also thank Paul Brown, the Deputy Chief Executive, Resource Management; Angus MacCracken, who has assisted me diligently here tonight; the Deputy Commissioner, Ian Stewart and commissioner delegate; and Ross Barnett, the Deputy Commissioner,

Specialist Operations, for attending here tonight. I thank all the other members from the different sections of the Queensland Police Service and also the Prostitution Licensing Authority who are present tonight. We did not receive a question in relation to that section, but I can certainly alleviate the community's concerns by saying that we have a very strong committee in the executive director, Margaret Isaac, and the chairman, Judge Manus Boyce. When we talk about ethical standards and ensuring that Queenslanders' expectations are met, I can say that they certainly achieve in leaps and bounds.

I thank the other members of the Queensland Police Service and also the staff from my office for the many hours they have put into this. I also thank other members from the parliamentary team and those who have assisted the panel here tonight. I know there have been hours and hours of work and I thank them for that. Finally, I obviously thank Hansard—we cannot forget Hansard—for their diligence. It is very important also to thank all members of the committee. It does not matter where you come from or from which side of politics, it is important that we have a safe Queensland. It is important that we have a system like this that gives us an opportunity to ask pertinent questions in relation to the budget of the state of Queensland and the QPS portfolio. Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 6.27 pm to 7.03 pm



CHAIR: The estimates hearing of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee is now resumed. We will continue with consideration of the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the corrective services and emergency services portfolio of the Minister for Police and Community Safety. Minister, would you like to say a few words?

Mr DEMPSEY: I am very honoured to be the minister of the Department of Community Safety. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the men and women who do such vital work day and night for the Department of Community Safety. It is quite outstanding. They certainly are the heroes of many communities throughout this fine state.

This department's duties and responsibilities are wide ranging, but every aspect has the same goal: keeping Queenslanders safe. The department's divisions are the Queensland Ambulance Service, represented tonight by the commissioner, Mr Russell Bowles; Queensland Corrective Services, represented by the commissioner, Marlene Morison; Emergency Management Queensland, represented by Mr Bruce Grady; and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, represented by the commissioner, Mr Lee Johnson. With me also is my director-general, Kelvin Anderson. I thank him for leading such a great department.

It is essential that the government manages the resources of this department in an efficient and very prudent way to make sure front-line needs are always met and never overwhelmed by bureaucracy. In this year's budget we have set out to get Queensland back on track. The total budget for DCS in 2012-13 is \$1.9 billion—an increase of \$85.8 million on the 2011-12 estimated actual. In addition, the budget provides for DCS capital spending of \$174.5 million.

I will outline some highlights. \$11 million is allocated over four years for the Academy of Disaster Management to enhance disaster management training. \$1.3 million is allocated in 2012-13 towards establishing a new SES headquarters in Cairns. \$51.4 million has been set aside for ambulance facilities and vehicles throughout the state. That includes \$18.4 million to commission 130 new and replacement ambulance vehicles.

We will be completing new ambulance stations at Coomera, North Lakes and Pinjarra Hills. The North Lakes station will be one of the largest in Queensland. I know that officers are looking forward to the years ahead there. We will be completing the replacement ambulance station at Calliope; continuing the construction of replacement ambulance stations at Cleveland and Kingaroy; commencing the construction of the replacement ambulance station at Emerald and the replacement ambulance station and relief quarters at Tara; continuing the refurbishment of the ambulance station at Gladstone; and completing the staff housing in the Surat and Bowen basins. As we know, both of those areas are increasing in an economic sense as well as in a population sense.

\$45.6 million has been allocated in 2012-13 for fire and rescue facilities and urban and rural fire appliances. That also includes—today saw the release in parliament of the operational support unit—a vehicle that is going to the Mackay region. That will service that area very well. That complements six other units around the state. It gives us great flexibility in relation to storms and natural disasters.

There is \$11.4 million for 21 urban fire appliances and \$4.6 million for 24 rural fire appliances. We will be completing the replacement fire and rescue station at Ripley—obviously Ipswich is experiencing continued growth; completing replacement auxiliary fire and rescue stations at Clifton, Milla Milla and Mount Tamborine; completing the replacement permanent auxiliary fire and rescue station at Emerald; completing the redevelopment of the auxiliary fire and rescue station at Walkerston; and continuing the construction of the new fire and rescue station at Brassall and the replacement auxiliary and rescue station at Mareeba.

\$2.8 million has been allocated in 2012-13 to Emergency Management Queensland for plant, equipment and information systems. \$2 million has been set aside to continue the redevelopment of the Spring Hill complex and ambulance station. \$4.6 million has been allocated in capital grants in support of the State Emergency Service.

A total of \$28.3 million has been allocated in 2012-13 to continue the \$442.8 million expansion and redevelopment of the Lotus Glen Correctional Centre. This also includes \$8.4 million that has been set aside for postoccupancy works at the Southern Queensland Correctional Precinct at Gatton—that is, stage 1. \$16.8 million has been allocated to continue the \$33 million cell upgrade program to modify cells in the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre. \$2.6 million will be spent on postoccupancy work for completed prison infrastructure.

Summing up, these measures are designed to create an efficient and well-managed department which is capable of responding quickly to any need. I thank the committee for the opportunity to make this opening statement. I look forward to the evaluation of this department and the questions ahead.

Mr BYRNE: My first question is to the director-general. I refer to page 5 of the DCS SDS, which sets out \$164 million to be saved from staffing reductions. What correspondence or advice did you provide to the minister, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service commissioner or their staff in relation to the cuts prior to the release of the budget affecting the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, specifically cuts to the Rural Fire Service, and any planning that was done in advance of those announcements to the affected staff?

Mr Anderson: I am not aware that I had written at all to the commissioner for fire over the matter, but we certainly have discussed the cuts in great detail—the efficiencies that needed to be made. You will notice from the way we have approached the efficiencies that we have done a couple of things. We have left front-line alone and we have gone for a number of reductions around non-core programs and back-of-house measures. So the department overall—and Fire is the same—still has front-line service operators at about 82 per cent of our total staffing complement. The rest are either back-of-house or in support. Total corporate services are just over four per cent. Can I just clarify the question? The last part was about rural fire?

Mr BYRNE: Specifically.

Mr Anderson: Very specifically about rural fire—

CHAIR: Member for Rockhampton, could you repeat the last part of the question?

Mr BYRNE: I specifically want to hone in on the Rural Fire Service and the announcements that were made and matters that evolved after that.

Mr Anderson: Indeed. We had considered the amount of reduction that we would need to make. We then designed a proposed way of doing that and had started consulting with that process. It was well publicised that that was very badly received, and the minister has announced that the way to take that forward is via a review that will be headed by a member of parliament, Ted Malone. That review and its terms of reference have now been established. Essentially, that was the circumstance. There was never an intention for any reduction in staffing to occur during the current fire season. That remains the case.

Mr BYRNE: My next question is to the commissioner of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. The minister described the announcement of the cuts to the Rural Fire Service as a premature release. The rural fire brigade—

CHAIR: Just hold on one second. You have to ask the minister or the DG; you cannot ask the commissioner directly.

Mr BYRNE: I will ask the DG. The minister described the announcement of the cuts to the Rural Fire Service, which you just alluded to, as a premature release. The Rural Fire Brigade Association, presumably after speaking to the minister, described it as a case of premature circulation and then the minister went on further saying that a very zealous person put that proposed model out before he had even had time to have look at it and sign it off. That is the situation. I would like to table a document titled 'Update from the Commissioner's Desk', from the commissioner of the Rural Fire Service. What I want to know is: is the commissioner of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service that zealot public servant who put things out without approval?

Mr Anderson: I would not mind reading the document first. Second, I cannot comment on what the minister might have said—I was not there—but I have certainly read that comment. Had that structure been signed by the minister, the answer is no.

Mr BYRNE: I am having trouble understanding how we get budget announcements and statements that have not been approved by the minister, with staff being informed by commissioners, and then we are sitting back now saying that the minister did not know about that. I will go a bit further

on that. Minister, you stand by the comment that you did not look at the proposal before it was released. How does this reconcile with the comments you made to the parliament after the budget, on 12 September, which happen to be strikingly similar to what the commissioner put out when you said—

The new regional structure will change from the current seven regions to three zones: northern, central and southern. It will see the loss of 56 support and administrative positions out of a total of 117. But let me stress that the new structure will continue to provide training and operational and administrative support to our 35,000 rural fire volunteers.

I cannot see how you can make a statement like that and not have seen the structure. Was the minister misleading the parliament when he announced that restructure on 12 September or are you misleading the association and the journalists by denying that you ever approved the cuts?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. We all know the great value of the Rural Fire Service and its importance for serving not just rural communities but many other growth areas that are very close to expanding urban areas. On 20 September 2012 I announced that the Newman government and the Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland had agreed to initiatives to ensure rural firefighters are empowered and equipped to protect their communities into the future. I held talks with the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland leadership on 19 September 2012 and agreed that government efficiencies in relation to rural fire would be achieved by the use of savings measures and revised staffing levels. As part of this process there will be a reduction in the number of full-time equivalent positions, but this will obviously be, as the director-general alluded to, limited to executive and administrative areas. I stress though that no adjustments on the rural operations structure will take place until after what is perceived to be the fire season—that is, March 2013.

I have also, as the director-general alluded to, announced that the member for Mirani, Ted Malone, will head a special ministerial review of the Rural Fire Service, closely supported by the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland, to be completed towards the end of February 2013. Mr Malone will be assigned along with senior members of the rural and urban fire services to investigate a new model which brings more autonomy, efficiencies and less red tape for Queensland's hardworking rural firefighters who just want to get on with the job. An earlier proposal to close a number of area offices in Roma, Barcaldine, Emerald, Charters Towers, Innisfail and Maryborough will not go ahead. They will remain appropriately staffed and regional offices in Maryborough and Toowoomba will remain open and staffed. The Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland supports this initiative of putting rural fire brigades back on track to achieve a model that empowers brigades to defend their communities not only from fire but also in floods and cyclones.

It is very important that we know the actual scope and aims of the review. Specifically, I note Ted Malone will also be making recommendations on the appropriateness of the current functions of the Rural Fire Service—a structure that provides leadership and service focused support to front-line officers while reducing unnecessary reporting bureaucracy and red tape, a support structure that recognises the different needs, training and requirements as well as the autonomy levels of the various classes of brigade, and the place of the Rural Fire Service within the fire service more generally. These are issues that have continued over a number of years that we as a government are addressing, as well as ways to boost front-line resources to identify areas and roles where efficiencies can be made; ways to support the brigade in the management of risks in areas such as fire prevention and land management; alternative means of funding the Rural Fire Service, because we have to look at other models as the Rural Fire Service evolves; and also ways to increase the empowerment of the rural fire brigades and personnel within those local communities.

So while looking at these and other relevant matters, we will also look at ways to improve the cooperation at a local level between the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service. It is very critical that anything to do with rural fires is looked at in a thorough way. I also note that there will be no closures of offices throughout the state until the review has been completed. As to whether there may be more offices or less offices, that is up to the review team to decide. Throughout this whole issue I have maintained that there will be no changes within the Rural Fire Service until a review has been completed. I am happy to pass on to the Fire Commissioner if need be for further clarification.

Mr BYRNE: Just a follow-up question to this. Minister, you are basically saying in front of this committee that you stand by the position that, when you made that speech the day after the budget, you did not have any knowledge of what those cuts necessarily were going to be or where they were going to be. I know what happened after 20 September; everybody does. I am talking about 12 September and the staff who were given very specific approaches from their line managers about what their futures were. You cannot tell me that that is going on within your organisation—

CHAIR: Member for Rockhampton, I would ask you to ask a question and not be repetitive. It is not up to you to make statements; it is up to you to ask questions.

Mr BYRNE: The question is: I need you to confirm that you knew nothing about what these cuts constituted when you spoke in the parliament on 12 September.

Mr DEMPSEY: The question you actually asked was different to the original question, but I am happy to surmise that what you are asking in relation to this particular matter is in relation to proposals. I sit down with the director-general and other members of the department to discuss a number of

proposals to take this department forward, whether it be the EMQ, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, the Ambulance Service or Corrective Services. So looking at proposals and then going the next step in relation to the fulfilment of those proposals is a large step, bearing in mind that I have full confidence in the members of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service in relation to their work. As I have said previously in a number of statements, as the minister I take full responsibility in relation to any concerns that may have gone out to the Rural Fire Service.

Mr BYRNE: The budget reflects a plan, does it not? When the budget papers are put to us—what we are here for—that reflects an agreed position and plan. It is not a think tank. Did you have the proposal defined prior to the budget being delivered on 11 September?

Mr DEMPSEY: In relation to the Rural Fire Service, we have always maintained that the overall structure of the Queensland Rural Fire Service would be in consultation with the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and the Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland whilst ensuring that we take everything into account and maintain the safety of all Queenslanders until after the end of the bushfire season—that is, March 2013.

Mr BYRNE: But you have \$164 million worth of savings talked about. You cannot put that into a budget on a whim.

CHAIR: Would the member for Rockhampton please ask a question.

Mr BYRNE: The question is: did you have a firm plan that was announced in the budget on 11 September?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. There was also \$39.3 million worth of reductions in expenditure in relation to contractors, consultants, advertising, travel and other administrative and operational costs and \$5.2 million from abolishing redundant carbon schemes in the QFRS, including cancellation of a number of service objectives. In Queensland Corrective Services, which was part of the \$164 million that the member alluded to, it also included \$12.1 million worth of reductions within the prison industries, \$4.6 million for the closure of Darling Downs, \$850,000 for the closure of the Capricorn dairy and \$5 million for sequencing a number of additional ambulance officers for the upcoming year. In relation to seeing numbers of plans and so forth—

Mrs MILLER: Mr Chair, I have a question. Minister, my colleague the member for Rockhampton has spoken about the budget of \$164 million and you obviously cannot tell this estimates committee what the expenditure of that \$164 million is for. Therefore, would you describe yourself as a totally incompetent minister?

CHAIR: Order!

Mr DEMPSEY: No.

Mrs MILLER: Well, you should, because \$164 million is a lot of money. It is a lot of money and you should be able to come before this committee and tell us exactly where this expenditure is to be spent right throughout Queensland. If you cannot do that, Minister, may I put it to you that you are incompetent and you should resign.

CHAIR: Member for Bundamba, you will ask a question. You will not abuse the minister.

Mrs MILLER: I am not abusing the minister.

CHAIR: What we need is questions to be asked.

Mrs MILLER: I am giving him some advice that he should resign.

CHAIR: Member for Bundamba, I will warn you. I will ask you to ask a question.

Mrs MILLER: Minister, can you now explain where that \$164 million is to be spent in detail across this state in relation to that budget item?

Mr DEMPSEY: The \$164 million is to be saved by reductions, obviously, in relation to staffing reductions primarily from the corporate administration and support sections.

Mrs MILLER: And can you detail all of those savings that you are so-called talking about and also in relation to the Rural Fire Service?

Mr DEMPSEY: In relation to the savings, obviously to create those savings it is 292 staff who will be impacted as of 4 October 2012. Some 52 have obtained replacements within the department, 152 are undertaking assessment processes for available positions, 21 are concentrating on offers of redundancies or whole-of-government registrations, two have selected whole-of-government registrations and 63 have accepted a redundancy and two have transferred for a position external to the department. That includes the possible permanent employee losses of 72 from corporate services—because we are trying to address the corporate and back of house first—18 from the QAS, 56 from the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, 79 from Corrective Services and a further 15. That brings it up to the 240.

Mrs MILLER: Obviously the budget goes before the cabinet, and my colleague the member for Rockhampton has asked you questions in relation to the detail of what you obviously took to the cabinet and took to the Treasurer. Obviously you were not confident in what your departmental officers or your director-general was putting to you if you cannot talk in detail in relation to the rural fire brigade and also in relation to the statements that you have made. So I am just asking you: given that you could not answer the questions from the member for Rockhampton, do you have confidence in your departmental director-general and officers?

Mr DEMPSEY: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I now call the member for Yeerongpilly.

Mr JUDGE: Regarding the restructure of the QAS, Minister, I note on page 5 of the Service Delivery Statements that the goal of the Queensland Ambulance Service is to provide a timely and quality ambulance service which meets the needs of the community. Can you tell me how the restructure of the QAS will achieve this?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question and thank him for his interest particularly in relation to the QAS, which is important not just in his electorate but throughout the whole of the state. At this time I also want to compliment the member for Rockhampton for his initiative for going out with a Queensland Ambulance Service crew within the Rockhampton area. The comments I received from other people were very positive and I am sure that that would have helped give you an understanding of the Queensland Ambulance Service, as it did for me as well. I am learning more new things every day and I really do appreciate the hardworking men and women within the Queensland Ambulance Service who do a terrific.

The SDS outlines the goal of the Queensland Ambulance Service to provide timely and quality ambulance services that meet the needs of the community. This restructure is in line with the SDS by cutting waste and reducing the burden on the Consolidated Fund and to contribute to the fiscal repair and revitalisation of front-line services, because that is what this government is about—ensuring that we reduce the bureaucracy, the red tape and do whatever we can to assist front-line services. The Queensland Ambulance Service structural reform program will involve the realignment of the existing operational and administrative boundaries from the current regions to match those of the 17 Queensland Health Hospital and Health Service boundaries. The effect of this will be the removal of the existing seven Queensland ambulance regions and the 21 operational areas, which will be replaced by the establishment of 16 local Ambulance Service networks. Fifteen of those local Ambulance Service networks will be geographically based throughout Queensland and the 16th Ambulance Service network will result from the establishment of state operations centre clusters, comprising the former regional communications centres. This structure will reduce the current layers that we have of the management by bringing the organisational decision makers closer to the front-line service delivery and enhancing the line of sight between local Ambulance Service networks, operations and the commissioner. Obviously, all members here know the great affinity between Queensland Health and the Queensland Ambulance Service. This restructure reduces a number of layers of bureaucracy and also ensures that we get responses to issues in a local area addressed in a timely manner.

The structural reform program will provide other benefits, including the introduction of the local service networks to focus the operations of the QAS on quality call services and that link, as I mentioned before, with the Queensland Health Hospital and Health Service boundaries. Local ambulance network managers will have direct reporting relationships with the officer in charge and the state operations model will ensure the ongoing coordination of the Queensland Ambulance Service's transportation activities and other special needs within the Queensland Ambulance Service. It also provides local ambulance services with accountable managers and staff to be located in existing front-line operational facilities, which will result in closer connection. As you can see, the restructure of the Queensland Ambulance Service will provide a large number of benefits and will strengthen the delivery of and support of front-line ambulance services across Queensland, which will be better for community. I would just ask the Queensland Ambulance Commissioner if he could like to make a comment.

Commissioner Bowles: As the minister just rightly pointed out, we have aligned the Queensland Ambulance Service boundaries to that of Queensland Health. To put a bit of context around that, as an ambulance service last year we responded about 800,000 to 900,000 times. Out of that, we have about 800,000 interactions with Queensland Health. Our current structure is very much structured around an emergency service type of structure. It is not that we do not need to be able to operate and work in that sphere, but every day we take 2,000 patients into Queensland Health.

The communications network that the minister referred to is currently attached to the seven regions that exist. What we will do through this process is make a network of those seven communications rooms. We take the borders out of patient flow so that wherever the patient needs to go from hospital to hospital, these communications room will no longer be attached to regions. So they will just have a seamless patient flow capacity.

Also, from my point of view, there are very few tiers between me and the actual local officer in charge of the ambulance station. So there is an officer in charge of the ambulance station, the person who runs the local ambulance service network and me. We obviously have support structures that help us deal with that, but that is the basis of the new structure.

CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, Minister. The committee is joined tonight by the member for Gympie. I call the member for Gympie.

Mr GIBSON: I thank the committee members for giving me leave to appear. I would like to ask some questions to the minister with regard to the deaf community. Can I start by declaring my interest and direct involvement in the deaf community in various organisations. There has been in Queensland a smoke alarm subsidy scheme available for deaf and hard-of-hearing Queenslanders who hold a pension card and there has been some speculation as to the future of that scheme. Could you please advise the committee of the future of the smoke alarm subsidy scheme under the Newman government?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. I will go into some of the background first of all, but obviously, what we are also doing is making sure that the market is tested as well. Deaf Services Queensland has estimated that as many as 200,000 people in Queensland living in 6,000 to 12,000 homes could be hearing impaired in some way. These people may not be able to hear a standard smoke alarm—and I know that my father was the same way towards the later part of his life. The Smoke Alarm Subsidy Scheme for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Persons commenced in December 2007, with an annual budget of \$150,000 per annum. Financially disadvantaged deaf and hard-of-hearing people may access subsidies for a specialised smoke alarm in single-level homes to a maximum of \$400 or in a multilevel home to a maximum of \$800. This financial year—2011-2012—over 5,404 people received the subsidy. Since the inception of the scheme in December 2007 to 30 June 2012—the end of the financial year—6,204 people have benefited.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is looking at the current capacity to sustain the smoke alarm subsidy scheme and other options. Consequently, on 13 September 2012 the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service commissioner met with Deaf Services Queensland with a view to making arrangements for Deaf Services Queensland to administer a replacement scheme up to the value of \$250,000 per year. In discussions with Deaf Services Queensland, between \$150,000 and \$250,000 would be required to continue with this scheme. Disability Services Queensland has expressed a preference for \$250,000 at commencement. They would also be looking at an annual increase in funding levels if they were successful in taking over the scheme.

Obviously, the installation and promotion of the smoke alarms is a key component of the work undertaken by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. It has made a number of installations. I would just like to see if the Commissioner for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service would like to comment in relation to this particular area.

Commissioner Johnson: As the minister said, in September I met with Brett Casey, who is the CEO of Deaf Services Queensland, to talk with him and work through the situation in regard to the subsidy scheme. Brett Casey has been made aware and expressed a very keen interest in taking over the administration of the scheme, because I guess in the long run administering such schemes is not core business for the Fire and Rescue Service. I also explained to him that, because the funding is public moneys, we would have to do a sounding of the market to make sure there are any other potential providers out there. Currently, the department's procurement staff is undertaking that market sounding. Hopefully, that will be finished in the not-too-distant future.

It may result in us having to go to market and take tenders, if you like, from people like Deaf Services Queensland. But we would envisage that the scheme could be undertaken in a different manner to the way it has previously been done and get back on track with the scheme functioning.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr GIBSON: Just to follow up on that and just for some clarification, in other states there is a cocontribution where they have a smoke alarm subsidy scheme. Was that part of the discussion for what would be the future in Queensland?

Commissioner Johnson: Not from my memory, it was not. I know in some other states other departments fund the scheme, like Family Services in New South Wales. But there are other ways and I think it probably needs a further look.

Mr GIBSON: One other question—

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, when asking the commissioner you must go through the minister.

Mr GIBSON: My apologies. Minister, I have just one other question. You may not be across it, but just towards the end of last week the federal government released its National Relay Service tender. That is a program by which deaf people are able to use the telephone to communicate with hearing people. Within that tender document the federal Labor government failed to include an SMS emergency service for the 000 service, despite the fact that since the last tender document was released—and

obviously the contract awarded—we have seen huge technological advances and we have seen other countries in the world adopt an SMS emergency service. Can you advise the committee what the failure of the federal government to include an SMS 000 emergency service could mean for Queenslanders?

Mr DEMPSEY: I saw the same information only a couple of days ago. While it is a disappointing result, it may put lives at risk. That is the simple answer.

Mr GIBSON: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you. I now call the member for Nudgee.

Mr WOODFORTH: At page 13 of the Service Delivery Statements reference is made to the number of SES volunteers. Can the minister outline how many of these SES volunteer numbers will be affected with the closing of the emergency services cadet program?

Mr DEMPSEY: Right at the outset I would like to compliment the supervisors of many of those cadet programs. I know many of the youngsters within the cadet programs throughout the whole state. This decision certainly was not an easy one, but no service is immune from budget efficiencies. When we looked at this particular program and what it was designed to achieve and what it was achieving, it did not match its key indicators. First of all, I would like to state that for those young people within the program, it is obviously a hard decision. They are great young citizens. There are a number of other programs within a number of communities that avails them with different pathways in relation to building good citizenship and other careers.

Recommendations out of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry related to the recruitment and retention of SES volunteers. To support these recommendations the department has reallocated \$6.8 million over four years to 2015-16 to enhance services within the SES. Central to the state budget were whole-of-government efforts to reduce the state's debt and ultimately return Queensland's AAA credit rating. Following a comprehensive consideration of costs, operations and structures, a series of measures have been identified to provide a future platform for Emergency Management Queensland, which will enable the meeting of resources and also program targets. The primary consideration to identifying reform within EMQ was to ensure that EMQ continues to provide services in the key areas of helicopter services, disaster management and SES support. We all know of the orange army and the great number of volunteers and the great work that they do.

To deliver the reform's agenda, the emergency services cadet program will be discontinued. That will be a saving of \$1.18 million per year. As I said previously, the decision to end this program, which commenced operating in 1994, was not an easy one, but the closure of the program in no way affects the ability of EMQ to continue to deliver effective disaster management and SES services to the Queensland community. The emergency services cadet program was a youth development program designed to introduce Queensland young people to emergency services training and to increase the actual numbers of the SES. However, the current number of cadets is over 600 and, of those, less than 10 per cent—60 cadets—have become SES volunteers. The program could no longer be sustained, but we will also be looking at other ways to meet the 2012 target of achieving over 7,000 SES volunteers. The emergency service cadet members who are now going towards the 16 years age group and their adult leaders have been encouraged to join the SES groups and to continue their association with emergency services and support the community.

My department, whilst doing that, is also in consultation with a number of other well established youth development programs and will explore viable options of transition of emergency service cadets into other programs. Additionally, the opportunity to transfer current cadet training programs to other worthwhile youth programs will be examined. I would like to ask if Mr Bruce Grady would like to make a comment in relation to that?

Mr Grady: I would like to also add my thanks to the fantastic adult leaders and the staff of EMQ who did such an outstanding job with these young people. As the minister has outlined, the unfortunate thing is that we are in the business of emergency services and response to the community in times of their greatest need and this particular program was not fulfilling its objective of transferring young people into those services. This year, as the minister has indicated, about 10 per cent—that is an average over the life of the program—of young people have transferred into the SES. In the 2011-12 year that number is 27. For the cost of the program that is about \$44,000 per person moving in. We can utilise those funds elsewhere in a much more productive way to attract volunteers into the SES and that was the basis on which this decision was taken.

CHAIR: Thank you. Minister, page 5 of the SDS refers to the closure of the Darling Downs Correctional Centre. Will the minister please inform the committee how the closure of the Darling Downs Correctional Centre has been managed?

Mr DEMPSEY: I would like to thank the chairman for the question in relation to the Darling Downs Correctional Centre. I know it is very close to his heart. I understand the passion that he has in relation to his community and the very valuable members of that community, many who worked within the correctional centre. On 17 July 2012 the government announced that the Darling Downs Correctional Centre and its dairy would close by 30 September 2012. The Darling Downs Correctional Centre closed

its gates for the last time on Friday, 28 September 2012. All the remaining prisoners were transferred to other facilities on Friday, 21 September. As we said, no department is immune to savings. The dairy has run at a loss since 2002. In 2011-12 the net loss was approximately \$376,000 and on 8 August 2012 the dairy ceased operation. The closure of the Darling Downs Correctional Centre and the dairy farm will provide expenditure savings of \$4.6 million over the next four years. The prison was built to accommodate 140 male prisoners in a low-security setting and also had the option to accommodate 40 work camp prisoners.

For a number of years the facility has been under-utilised by the correctional service. The infrastructure has also had no significant upgrades since 1995. That was trying to balance the cost of doing it and the use of it considering the modernisation of correctional services throughout the state. The building contained asbestos, had poor fire safety standards and the prisoner accommodation was heading towards being substandard. The infrastructure is lower quality than the other two low security facilities in Southern Queensland, that being Palen Creek Correctional Centre and the Numinbah Correctional Centre.

In relation to impacts on your constituents, the centre employed 39 full-time equivalent staff, not including eight work camp staff. The Queensland Corrective Services Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner and a human resources officer attended the centre on 18 July 2012 to provide information to staff on the closure. Employees have been offered transfers to other facilities where vacancies are available or voluntary redundancies where applicable. As of 19 September, 13 staff members have been placed in other government agencies, all but one in Queensland Corrective Services; one staff member has elected to be an employee requiring replacement; and 24 staff have accepted a voluntary redundancy. The general manager remains part of the decommissioning team until 31 October 2012. The prisoners who were accommodated at the Darling Downs Correctional Centre are being transferred to Palen Creek Correctional Centre in Southern Queensland where appropriate and we are making sure there is a smooth integration. We will be looking at the work camp at Jondaryan Shed in the future but the other work camps at Mitchell, Charleville, Dirranbandi and St George will continue and will be operated from Palen Creek Correctional Centre.

CHAIR: I now call the member for Rockhampton.

Mr BYRNE: Minister, I draw your attention to page 4 of the DCS SDS highlighting the critical issue of maintaining community confidence in the services in the challenging fiscal environment. I am particularly focusing on what looks like being a difficult bushfire season. Can you give this committee an indication of the percentage of controlled burns that have been completed across the state, particularly with a focus on any operational planning or activity in the iZones and what remaining risk profile you suspect remains across those particularly vulnerable zones, and how many rehearsals have been conducted or exercises, rehearsals or incident control or management planning type events to prepare for this season?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. Obviously there are a number of details in relation to all those aspects, but the important issue to remember is the hardworking volunteers that we have within the rural fire service that go about their duties diligently serving their communities. Wherever I have gone and visited them, whether it was Clifton the other day or in Cairns a couple of weeks earlier, they are outstanding passionate people who are there to serve their communities. Many of those volunteers are not just part of the rural fire service, but they are in the SES or other community organisations spread throughout the whole of the state and they do a terrific job. It is incumbent on this government, whilst we do the review, to empower people and make sure that we have resources in those local communities, concentrating on functional leadership structures as well as the ongoing funding for this vital service in the future. For those particular operational matters I will pass to the Commissioner.

Commissioner Johnson: Thank you for the question. Each year we determine an operational period for the fire season. It commenced on 1 August this year and it has been determined that this year's operation is Operation Yaamba. It will run right through to the end of the year and depending on the rest of the fire season outlook, with the Southern Oscillation Index and el nino or la nina, we will extend it as required. As part of the preparation this year, during winter in July the minister and I launched the bushfire awareness program in Townsville. As you may be aware, the fire season in Queensland or in Northern Australia basically happens at the end of the winter, primarily reaches its peak now in springtime and then generally by summertime, if conditions are right in Queensland, it gets wet and Bruce takes over in storms, floods and cyclones.

What we have in Queensland also is the 'permit to light fire' system which is controlled by fire wardens right throughout the state. That promotes the use of fire to reduce the hazard of bushfire in Queensland. That is both in a primary production sense in the landscape and also for general landholders. Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is not a landowner, therefore we do not have our own land to burn, but we are there to assist other agencies of government that own land such as the Parks and Wildlife Service and Natural Resources and also other landholders. We have a range of committees starting at the state level, the state interdepartmental committee, which is chaired by the

Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations and has those key agencies of government that are responsible for land management, including ourselves. At the regional level we also have a stepdown of that relationship, the regional interdepartmental committees, which have regional people associated with that and then below that again are local fire management groups which essentially have additional people like local government and other agencies in there. We work with all of those groups to promote hazard reduction and the use of, in our case, fire principally to reduce that hazard, although other means can be used including slashing and earthworks.

In the lead-up to every fire season, as part of my QFRS divisional plan and commission of priorities, I require every region to conduct a series of exercises at a major level, going down through medium to a smaller level where we test preparedness, we test communication and we test command and control arrangements. They are carried out throughout by the assistant commissioners and the regional manager rural operations. So that has happened again in the lead-up to this fire season and gone very well. As well, our Prepare.Act.Survive community messaging has been extensively used in the media. We also have within the rural fire service in particular a band of some now 296 trained volunteer community educators who work tirelessly in their communities to spread the message to landholders on how to prepare for and be ready for bushfire in case it breaks out. One of the issues that is part of that is that sometimes getting our message across is difficult because people have busy lives and there is, I guess, a lot of competing safety messaging. We found that unless there has been some recent fire activity sometimes it is difficult to get the community's attention, but since we have brought the volunteer community educators program in we are much more effective because they are local people, living locally in that particular community and they are able to do the door knocking, do the street, do the community hall type meetings pretty successfully and we are pretty proud of that.

All in all there has been quite a number of burns. We are not responsible as such per se for how much burning Parks do, but we have certainly worked very closely with them, including Queensland Rail, Transport and Main Roads and Natural Resources. They are the landholder and they are responsible. There is a very old saying in rural fire in Queensland: 'the person that owns the land owns the risk'. Part of our role is to help people reduce the hazard. We and rural brigades are more than willing to go out to landholders and make sure that first of all they have a permit to light a fire, because that is a legal document that provides the protections that are necessary, and we will work with people—in fact, we will try to coordinate some of our pre-fire season major exercises as actually hazard reduction works. That is pretty well the annual preparation for each cycle of fire season. Thank you.

Mr DEMPSEY: Just to add to that, the website is www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au. We have received a considerable amount of feedback from that. It is a great website. It alleviates a lot of fears. It can identify a particular fire in a rural setting that has a permit. We have seen in the past that when people see smoke they get alarmed. If they can be referred to that particular website, it eases a lot of those concerns and anxieties. It also reduces the stress on other emergency services and phone numbers because people ring in and clutter the lines, not knowing that a certain site already has a permit and was authorised.

Mr BYRNE: Minister, I refer to that same point on page 5 of the DCS SDS about the \$164 million in staffing reduction savings. In light of the postponed recruit courses for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, what is your projections on the full-time staffing levels in six months time and potentially 12 months, based on that lack of input? At least, that is the way I am looking at it.

Mr DEMPSEY: I have attended a number of inductions in relation to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and have seen the quality of the recruits that are coming through. It is of a high standard. Certainly we are very lucky in Queensland to have that quality of people going through the academy. They participate in their work in a very professional manner. Recently I was at an urban search and rescue course being held out at Fort Lytton. Those officers are the best in the world. The rest of the world comes to Queensland to get their expertise. I do not know John Cawcutt, the area director, but Queensland certainly appreciates his calm demeanour and his efficiency in relation to those particular exercises. When a disaster happens elsewhere in the world, they look to Australia and they look particularly to Queensland, because we have the expertise to set up in a particular area, wherever a disaster happens, and have it all in-house. With the academy, we have not seen the actual attrition rates in previous years for the replacement of those officers. For further details, I will pass to the commissioner.

Commissioner Johnson: In relation to the question about cancelled recruit courses, that was a decision that I took earlier this year based on a couple of factors. First, people who join the Fire and Rescue Service stay forever. We have extremely low turnover rates and generally turnover in all our staff, both firefighters and non-firefighters, is less than 100 a year. A couple of years ago, we actually increased our recruit numbers based on just having a look at the age profile of our workforce. Of course, many of us are getting a little bit older and our workforce is no different to many. What happened next, though, was that the GFC came along and nobody retired as they said they would. We actually had increased our number of firefighters and had been carrying over established numbers for a considerable period.

When it came to the planning of the recruit course that should be running right now, it was also based on the staffing requirements for the stations coming online at Ipswich. Because the Capital Works Program and the timing of it was a little bit slower than we had originally thought, I could not justify the running of a recruit course now. However, at this stage the January course, which is in the planning phases at the moment, looks like taking 32 firefighters. We will be both replacing and making provision for the new station that is coming online, firstly, through Ripley. We will be putting some of those extra firefighters to the Ipswich area and then, as the Brassal station is completed, we will be able to close the older Ipswich station in Limestone Street and the staff in Ipswich will move into two brand-new facilities.

Basically, we have not had the turnover that was anticipated. We have actually more full-time firefighters on our books than are technically approved. That is not a bad thing. It is always good to have some extra staff available to us. The timing of the increase in staffing required for Ripley/Brassal was just a bit slower in the planning phase than we had originally estimated. That is why I determined that we would not run the course this year. There definitely will be a course in January. As I say, it looks like there will be about 32 new recruits on that course.

Mrs MILLER: Minister, I refer to page 5 of the SDS indicating the \$39.3 million cut from contractors, consultants, advertising, travel and other administrative and operational costs. Can the minister outline if ambulance officers are correct when they state they face reductions in pay of \$13,000 in proposed changes to their workforce entitlements, including meal break allowances? Why wont you as minister meet with Gary 'Blocker' Bullock of United Voice and John Oliver of the firefighters union to discuss these grave concerns that particularly the ambulance officers have?

Mr DEMPSEY: In relation to the industrial relations issues with the unions as part of the EB agreements, as a government we have always said that we will negotiate in a fair and reasonable way. I have met with a number of union representatives throughout the state. Those negotiations are continuing through the independent commission. I have spoken to John Oliver recently and said that once the EB negotiations have finished, particularly in relation to the IR components that come under the minister assisting the Premier, I will be happy to discuss any other issues with them. We must bear in mind that we want an outcome that is in the best interests of the Queensland Ambulance Service and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, but also meets the expectations of the Queensland taxpayers.

The Queensland Ambulance Service Determination 2010 operates until September 2012 and covers all Queensland Ambulance Service employees. Negotiations are and will continue in accordance with the government's wages policy and reasonable offers have been put to the union representatives in relation to QAS employees and the fire service employees. We understand the importance of that. I would like to reiterate that, if there are any concerns about safety issues, we have very responsible Queensland ambulance officers, as the member for Rockhampton well knows. Queensland fire and rescue officers are also responsible. They will attend to emergencies. They will attend to all 000 callouts. Obviously there are a number of union activities in relation to the enterprise bargaining agreement. I respect the unions' position in relation to whatever campaigns they run. However, this government will continue in a fair and reasonable way in relation to those enterprise bargaining agreements.

Mrs MILLER: As a follow-up question, Minister, I put it to you that you are failing in your duty as a minister by not meeting with United Voice and the firefighters union—

CHAIR: Member for Bundamba, ask a question.

Mrs MILLER:—just because there is enterprise bargain underway. Would you agree that you have failed in your duty?

CHAIR: Member for Bundamba, ask a question.

Mrs MILLER: I am asking the minister whether or not he believes that he has failed in his duty as a minister with his decision not to meet Gary Bullock of United Voice and John Oliver of the firefighters union, simply because there is an enterprise bargaining issue underway at the moment? Why are you hiding in your ministerial office and failing to meet these unions, which is so important to them and is so important to their members?

Mr DEMPSEY: I would like to refer the member to the fact that my Queensland Ambulance Service Commissioner met with Mr Bullock in relation to negotiations only yesterday.

Mrs MILLER: I am talking about you, Minister.

Mr DEMPSEY: I met briefly with John Oliver and I said I would be having conversations with him in the future, once the enterprise bargaining agreements have been sorted through the independent commission. I reassure all members of any unions involved in the Queensland Ambulance Service and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service that this government stands behind those members and it will maintain the safety of the state. It will also ensure that it negotiates in the best interests of members of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and the Queensland Ambulance Service. They are unbelievably hardworking, professional and dedicated men and women.

Mrs MILLER: They are hardworking but you are not; you hide in your office.

CHAIR: Excuse me, member for Bundamba!

Mr DEMPSEY: In answer to the member's question, we will continue to do that in a fair and reasonable way, respecting everybody within that process.

Mrs MILLER: You are not respecting the unions, Minister.

Mr JUDGE: Minister, I refer to the EMQ helicopter availability. On page 13 of the service delivery statement, reference is made to the percentage of EMQ Helicopter Rescue base availability. Can the minister outline to the committee the strategies to support continued availability of the rescue helicopter services?

Mr DEMPSEY: A number of times I have attended at Archerfield with the member for Yeerongpilly, Carl Judge. It is great to see him in that electorate, working hard for his constituents. I know of the interest that he shows in the simple heroes of EMQ. Those officers are quite outstanding and well recognised throughout the world for their efforts. This government has provided \$22 million towards the cost of operating EMQ Helicopter Rescue in 2012-13. Emergency Management Queensland Helicopter Rescue provides aeromedical and air rescue operation services 24 hours a day, seven days a week from three bases: Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns. It has an air fleet of three Augusta Westland 139s and two Bell 412 helicopters. Those are quite outstanding vehicles and we certainly have world-class crews operating those units.

In 2011-12 EMQ Helicopter Rescue base availability was 89.7 per cent against the state service delivery of the SDS target of 85 per cent. Queensland rescue base availability varies subject to scheduled and unscheduled maintenance and other factors, including training, aircrew availability and fatigue management. In 2011-12, EMQ Helicopter Rescue totalled 3,122 engine hours, which involved 1,751 operational tasks and this included flood relief operations to stricken communities across the state.

In late November 2011, Rio Tinto provided sponsorship funding of \$10 million over 10 years to EMQ Helicopter Rescue. The primary objective of Rio Tinto's sponsorship is to support EMQ Helicopter Rescue and their staff in providing improved services to the community of Queensland. I thank Rio Tinto, their executive and their employees for that commitment. Obviously Rio Tinto, as a private company, understands the importance of and highlights the issue of safety. It is great to see that partnership between a company such as Rio Tinto and EMQ, which have a great deal synergy in relation to the safety aspects of both their working communities, as well as that of the whole of Queensland.

That particular funding was used to upgrade the AW139 helicopters to carry an additional 400 kilograms which can be used for extra equipment, personnel or fuel. A further safety initiative was installed to enhance the terrain warning system which will provide greater aircraft safety during low level operations in all types of terrains. As I said previously, the Rio Tinto sponsorship is a great example of making sure we have safe Queensland communities.

The Queensland government is also reviewing the way it delivers government air wing services. Air services that are included in the review are the government air wing, the police air wing and the Emergency Management Queensland Helicopter Rescue service. Specific core requirements will underpin the government's review of government air services. We will be conducting this review over the next 12 months. This will mean no lessening of the capacity of any government aviation services.

While the government will consider all options for the delivery of aircraft services, it is important to note that there will be a strong preference for arrangements for the exclusive use of aircraft as a means of ensuring the delivery of air services is not compromised. The government will seek an indication from prospective tenderers about the capacity to absorb existing Queensland air services staff or existing aircraft if necessary in taking over all or part of the management of government air services. It is a high standard that we seek. We want to make sure there is no reduction in service delivery times and operations and that we maintain the highest standard of commitment of the operators that we have in particular areas—that is, the operators of the EMQ helicopters and the Queensland police aircraft.

They do a magnificent job. Their commitment is outstanding. We only have to look at the vision of them coming in in a flood or other disaster. They go above and beyond. They are the type of people we want attending those emergencies. Bruce Grady, would you like to make a comment?

Mr Grady: It is certainly a source of great pride to me to lead an organisation such EMQ Helicopter Rescue. We only have to look back to the images in the Lockyer Valley to see the amazing work that is done. We also need to understand that these crews do that work every day of the week. Whilst we do concentrate our efforts and vision in disasters, that work does go on every day of the week.

I think this review is in fact an opportunity and we should welcome it. We know that we are world-class operationally, but this will enable us to test the other aspects of this service and to look to the commercial sector to see whether there are opportunities from the private sector to either improve the asset management or to improve the maintenance and utilisation of these assets. As we go through this

process, we will not only confirm the outstanding operational outcomes that the helicopter rescue service provides but we will make sure that we are running the business to best value for the community of Queensland as well.

Mr CHOAT: Minister, I must take this opportunity to express to you the gratitude of the people in my electorate for the soon to be fire and rescue station at Brassall. It is very important because it will place that station right on top of the Warrego Highway which, of course, runs right through the middle of the electorate. It is very important to have those services. I want to talk about rural fire services—obviously, they are also very important to my electorate—and specifically about volunteer consultation. I do note that the minister has mentioned the word empowerment. I am really pleased to hear about that. I would like the minister to explain how the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has undertaken to ensure the views of volunteers are fully incorporated into policy decisions to ensure bureaucracy and red tape are minimised for those volunteers?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. I would commend the member on his commitment towards his local community. I know he is very passionate and obviously very happy to see the commitment for the Brassall Fire Station. I would also like to acknowledge that a great deal of planning has gone on in the past to ensure that the fire needs of the Ipswich area, both in Ripley and Brassall, are met. In making that commitment we identified the growth in that particular area. We had to ensure we have an adequate Queensland Fire and Rescue Service to meet that growth. The old Limestone Street fire station in Ipswich has done its time and whilst it will be sadly missed, it is great to see these two new fire stations, obviously divided by the mighty river of Ipswich, built to service both those areas.

In relation to your question concerning rural operations, in May 2012 the rural operations strategic working group structure was implemented to ensure the concerns of the Rural Fire Service volunteers and the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland can be raised and addressed in an open and transparent process. Three strategic working groups and one strategy and governance steering committee have been established, each involving representation from the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland, the Rural Fire Service volunteers and the operational support staff. The three operational strategic working groups are the volunteer and support strategic working group, the operations strategic working group and the research and training strategic working group.

The focus of each working group includes: ensuring—and this is one of our most valuable assets—that volunteers and the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland are included in decision making and not just consultation; empowering the stakeholders to make decisions themselves where possible and suitable but also enabling all rural operations to focus on volunteers and continually ask what is best for our volunteers not what is best for us, which is very important; empowering volunteers wherever possible—volunteers should be empowered to make decisions that affect them and also affect their community; and simplifying governance requirements to reduce red tape. That goes across all portfolios. It is about reducing the amount of paperwork whilst still meeting the high standards set by the people of Queensland. It is about ensuring that people can get on with the job and the core business that they are assigned to.

The strategic and governance steering committee has been formed to empower each working group to make its own decisions with the steering committee to provide direction to the working groups. They will be driven by support for the volunteer centric approach to ongoing administration, equipment and vehicle provision. Would the commissioner like to make any comments in relation to that?

Commission Johnson: The working groups that have been put together and principally overseen by the assistant commissioner of rural operations are making good steady progress, particularly in the area of red tape reduction and making sure that volunteers are not overencumbered with bureaucracy. We have good representation on those committees and working groups. They are made up of staff, volunteers and formally members from the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland. It has been a great initiative and it is making good progress.

Like all government agencies there are a number of acts and regulations and obligations that we have. We just have to make sure, in terms of our volunteers, that we do not make it so onerous that it is difficult to volunteer. Obviously if you want to get good feedback on how things are going and how the processes that are undertaken are going it is best to go to the horse's mouth, as they say, and ask the volunteers directly. We are doing that and it is going very well. We will continue on for a long time to come.

Miss BARTON: My question is about the breathing apparatus and resuscitation equipment. I think it is probably a rather appropriate time of year that we ask this question given the significance of yesterday for the QFRS. It was a great privilege for me to be able to go to Southport yesterday and express my gratitude to the serving officers of the QFRS and to pay tribute to those who have lost their lives serving and protecting Queenslanders. I am wondering if you could advise the committee on safety improvements that are currently being made by the QFRS in relation to respiratory protection for firefighters when they are attending incidents?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. Breathing apparatus and resuscitation equipment are very important. I remember going through a number of different courses when I was in the auxiliary fire service and a brief opportunity when I was in the Rural Fire Services. In certain circumstances we know the importance of having proper BA in place.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is responding to an increasing number of incidents in both the urban and rural environment. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has a strong commitment to the welfare of its staff. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service promotes a continual improvement approach to firefighter respiratory protection. I had the opportunity with Assistant Commissioner Weston in Cairns to look at a number of breathing apparatus and go through the scientific side of ensuring safety standards and how they are assembled. Today we had an operational support unit in front of Parliament House for a brief time. The capacity and flexibility that they have to replenish the BA systems goes to show that we continue to improve. We need to continue to improve in relation to breathing apparatus.

Currently the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is replacing the breathing apparatus equipment with the latest generation of breathing apparatus. This equipment delivers enhanced firefighting safety in that it has been designed and tested to the latest Australian standards. The phased introduction of new BAs is continuing across the organisation with the south-east, the south-west, north coast and northern regions all but completed. The central, far northern and Brisbane regions will receive new equipment in October 2013.

To date, 1,774 BA sets and 4,155 cylinders, at a total cost of \$4.5 million, have been introduced into the service. A further 238 BA sets and 626 cylinders have been accepted, tested—which is very important—and delivered to the far north region at a cost of \$631,000. Further orders for the Brisbane region and the school of fire and rescue will total \$1.331 million.

It is very pertinent, while we are discussing resuscitation equipment, to think of the recent fire in the back of Riverview. A brave mum saved her seven young children. Obviously there was a great response from the local community. I lived in Duncan Street, which is around the corner from there, as a young boy. It is great to see the communities coming together. It highlights the importance of BA equipment when fire officers are attending such fires. Full credit to that family that they actually had a fire plan in place. They had a plan in place and they ran through that plan. It just goes to show the fire safety message that will continue throughout schools is a great asset to young children. I commend the lady and obviously her children. It was a great outcome.

The QFRS is also upgrading current resuscitation equipment to a more contemporary design that will provide greater portability at incidents. The new design incorporates a backpack harness and improvements as recommended by the Queensland Ambulance Service medical director. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is scheduled to introduce these units by region from December 2012, with the project to be completed by July 2013. The total number of units to be purchased is 547 at a cost of a bit over \$504,000. This is much needed equipment as we have to keep up with the high standards in relation to those personnel and the equipment they use. Commissioner, would you like to make any comment? I know you have a personal interest in the breathing apparatus.

Commissioner Johnson: One of the great features of the new breathing apparatus sets compared to the sets that we are phasing out that have reached the end of their 12-year operational life is that the new Scott breathing apparatus has very much lower levels of maintenance requirements and are much more effective in terms of being able to be up for duty. So that roll-out program continues. I myself am scheduled to do some further breathing apparatus training at the live fire complex at the school of fire and rescue service training at the Port of Brisbane shortly, although I keep putting it off. But I guess that is a bit foolish because as summer comes it is even worse.

The new sets combined with the new resuscitation equipment will mean that we will be phasing out the traditional Oxy-Viva hard case resuscitation devices that people might be familiar with. Our equipment will be very much in line with the Queensland Ambulance Service in terms of when we support them and members of the community and our staff in need. It is very much interchangeable equipment, so that is a very good outcome.

Just further to your commentary about Robyn Tongue, the mother in Riverview, is the Fire Ed program for the year 1 schoolchildren. I think she mentioned that it was the children who actually brought about that discussion at home about having a fire plan. I guess that is part of our strategy, targeting those year 1 school-age children in that many of them do take that message home and that conversation does happen with the adults. We actually find it more effective than sending the message directly to the parent sometimes, with the kids talking about it and saying, 'This is what we did at school today.' It is just a great outcome because it would have been a terrible tragedy had anybody lost their life in that fire. So it was a good outcome.

CHAIR: I call the member for Nicklin.

Mr WELLINGTON: I refer the minister to the Queensland Ambulance Service and its reliance in some areas in Queensland on support from our community first response units. I use this opportunity to share with members and the minister that on Monday night this week I attended the Kenilworth First

Response group's annual general meeting. I understand in the last year the Kenilworth First Response group attended more category 1 call-outs than some ambulance stations in Queensland. Will the minister investigate a new way for the Ambulance Service to better support the Kenilworth First Response group, perhaps by way of a trial during the busy Christmas or Easter periods? In particular, I have asked to refer the minister to the Rainbow Beach ambulance model.

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. It is an important issue and that is what it is about. It is about addressing local needs and being able to have that contact with ground-up issues in relation to particularly first response groups. Whilst you are acknowledging the great work of local ambulance committees, they are quite outstanding people who certainly are very passionate about their own local ambulance authorities. I have a very passionate group in Bundaberg. The amount that they contribute to those little back-up things within their local ambulance stations is quite unique. But for the operational details and so forth, I would like to pass to the commissioner.

Commissioner Bowles: Yes, our first responders are the life and the heartbeat of a lot of local communities throughout Queensland. In fact we have 30 of them that operate often in more isolated communities throughout Queensland. The idea of first response I suppose is that there is always a second response and that second response always comes from a trained paramedic crew. In the case of the ones that border around the Sunshine Coast, I suppose Imbil would be a good example. It did 42 cases last financial year. Kenilworth were a little bit busier; they completed 107 cases last financial year. As I say, although the numbers are not big, they play a very important role within their communities. Not only do you find that they are the first responders for ambulance; they are also working with Bruce and they are also working with Lee and basically helping their community more broadly.

With the Rainbow Beach model, as you know the population at Rainbow Beach does swell quite significantly during the holiday seasons. When we get to a threshold—and it is not only the number of cases that a place does but also always that availability of that second response that tells us whether we need a program in those communities for when the population swells. For Rainbow Beach, yes, we put a paramedic in there I think for around 10 or 11 weeks a year for the school holidays. But that also provides support back through Tin Can Bay and so on—those areas get very busy and their population swells quite significantly. But the response from Gympie is quite a significant response. But as an ambulance service we continue to look at workloads. When the workload hits a threshold then we look at a bridging type method like Rainbow Beach and as time goes on you do end up with a permanent service.

Mr WELLINGTON: Is that saying, yes, the service is going to look at a trial for the Kenilworth-Mary Valley first responders or is that saying, yes, we know they are doing a good job and leave it as it is?

Commissioner Bowles: Yes, they are doing a good job and we will continue to monitor it. While a workload of 107 is getting up there, there is relatively close assistance—and I know it is not right next door but there is assistance from Maleny, Nambour and so on. I was the area director on the Sunshine Coast when the Kenilworth first responders were set up. At this stage we will continue to monitor and see how the workload grows.

Mr WELLINGTON: Do you have any figure in mind that first response call-outs may need to reach before we can look at some additional support on a trial basis for the Kenilworth first responder unit?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question and I pass that question to the ambulance commissioner.

Commissioner Bowles: As I said before, there is no magic number. It is all about what resources we can put into the place in a very short time frame. As you know, on the Sunshine Coast we can put a lot of resources into a place like Kenilworth very quickly and we have multiple types of resources that we can put in there. For example, we have the very good work of the AGL helicopter at Maroochydore whereby we can put qualified paramedics in there very quickly. We can send staff from Maleny, Nambour and a whole range of other places. So it is not just a threshold number. It is when we believe that the responses require not to be backed up from a neighbouring place due to excessive growth in an area. We have put ambulance services into a range of places when they do get to a threshold. But, as I say, there is not just one criteria that you would use. If you look at that, they do do a response about every four days. As I say, we are very grateful and it is magnificent work that they do for their communities.

Mr WELLINGTON: We will keep bringing it to the minister's attention. Minister, I understand that when a first response unit needs to purchase a replacement vehicle it is not able to access stamp duty exemptions which are available when an ambulance is purchased. Is there any opportunity for that to be reviewed so that first responders are able to access the same concessions as for ambulance vehicles?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question and I pass that question to the Queensland Ambulance Service Commissioner, Russell Bowles.

Commissioner Bowles: To put that in some sort of context, no first responders, as in the voluntary first responders, do the Queensland Ambulance Service provide vehicles to. Kenilworth may have changed a little bit since I was there, but I do believe that their vehicle is bought by the community with some assistance from sponsorship. But, as I say, that may have changed somewhat since I have been there. Where we do provide a vehicle, we go to another level of volunteerism which is an honorary. That is another standard I suppose of response where they will have a vehicle available to them. I suppose a good example of that is somewhere like St Lawrence, which is on a very busy highway. It does not do a lot of work. The gentleman who has been there has been there for over 50 years, but he is an honorary. He gets constant upgrading to that honorary skill level and is maintained at that level.

Mr WELLINGTON: The question was not about that you provide a vehicle. It was more about whether the first responders when they replace their vehicle are able to access stamp duty concessions which I understand the Ambulance Service is able to access when an ambulance vehicle is purchased. At the moment when a first responder vehicle needs to be replaced they are not able to access any of those concessions which the Ambulance Service is able to access when it purchases an ambulance vehicle. So my question is: is there a way where those concessions can also be available to the first responder vehicles, because they are effectively doing first response to emergency call-outs?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question in relation to first responders. Mr Chairman, we will take that question on notice if that is all right with the member.

Mr WELLINGTON: I am more than happy for that.

Mr DEMPSEY: I believe we have 48 hours.

CHAIR: Until five o'clock Monday.

Mr DEMPSEY: If you are happy to get that back then. I want to thank the member for his interest in the first responders. Throughout Queensland they do a magnificent job in relation to giving support to the Queensland Ambulance Service. You normally find that those people are also very good with other community groups in those areas.

Mr WELLINGTON: I have one further question, Minister. I note that on page 5 of the Service Delivery Statement is listed a range of achievements for 2011-12. Reference is made to the recruitment of an additional 52 ambulance officers. Minister, you have indicated that this year there will be 60 additional ambulance officers to meet increasing demand for ambulance services—eight more than last year after taking into account retirement and natural attrition of staff. What will be the net gain of the Queensland ambulance staff numbers as a result of the recruitment? In particular, will there be any additional staffing to the Sunshine Coast area? And again I refer to the Caloundra to Noosa Sunshine Coast area.

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. The last part of the question is a positive result, but I will get to that in a short period of time. In relation to staffing to meet increasing demand to services, 60 additional positions have been funded for 2012-13 at a cost of \$1.58 million on top of the 52 for 2011-12, and front-line staffing numbers of the Queensland Ambulance Service as of 30 June 2012 were 3,404 FTEs. The target for 2011-12 for operational staff as a percentage of the total personnel of greater than 82.6 per cent was exceeded, with an actual percentage of 84.3 per cent. The target for 2012-13 has also increased to greater than 84 per cent to show that particular growth. I understand that it will be going to 24 hours, but I will pass on to the commissioner to give you the operational details.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I call the member for Rockhampton.

Mr DEMPSEY: Sorry. Through you, Chair, the pertinent part of the question—the second part of the member's question—in relation to the operation will be answered by the commissioner.

Mr WELLINGTON: It may be very important.

Commissioner Bowles: Thank you, Minister. As the minister just said, we are dispersing 60 front-line staff throughout the state. The Sunshine Coast area that you loosely referred to there—basically from Caloundra to Nambour—will receive an additional 24-hour intensive care pod. That is a high-level intensive care paramedic. That is the highest level of clinical service delivery that we offer.

Mr WELLINGTON: Where will that be attached to?

Commissioner Bowles: Maroochydore would be the logical place, due to the road network and the ability to respond to the whole of the Sunshine Coast. That will support the intensive care paramedics that we already have on the Sunshine Coast who work as part of a two-officer crew. We also have intensive care paramedics who work out of the AGL base at the Sunshine Coast Airport.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner and Minister. I now call the member for Rockhampton.

Mr BYRNE: I have a question to the director-general about the Queensland Ambulance Service. I am wondering if you have been involved in any briefings—receiving or delivering—of proposals for outsourcing of functions such as patient transfers and community training programs? Have you requested any briefings from any of your subordinates, have you delivered any briefings targeting that or have you been involved in any activities associated with outsourcing of those agents?

Mr Anderson: Thank you for the question. We are continuing to look at all aspects of our operations all the time, but for these kinds of matters that is a policy decision that would need to be taken prior to me engaging in any discussions. So is it true that as an executive we look at all aspects of our operations? That is quite true. We do it with Corrective Services, we do it with Emergency Management Queensland and we do it with the Fire and Rescue Service. Have we got a specific proposal that we are putting in terms of patient transport and transfer? I assume you mean our patient transfer service. The answer is no. At this stage, there is no proposal that we are proceeding with.

Mr BYRNE: I have a supplementary on the same theme but a different area of the department. What about correction centres? What about any discussions that you might be having with Serco or the CEO group in relation to privatisation of further correctional centres like Woodford, the Brisbane Correctional Centre or the Escort and Security Branch? Have you at any time had any discussions with anyone about the sale of the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre?

Mr Anderson: We have certainly spoken to our private prison providers and we do regularly. The Corrective Services model in Queensland is a mixed model and has been for some 20 years. It is probably one of the most successful mixed models in the country. We have been very, very satisfied with the arrangements we have with our private prison providers and the high standard of service that is provided by the public system.

It is true that, when we came to look at the new prison which is the southern Queensland correctional precinct at Gatton, we entered into an arrangement where we had closed Borallon and we had contracted that with Serco. That was a vote of confidence in the services we were getting from our private providers. Our private providers are worldwide providers and, to their credit, they will come and talk to us about options that are available to us in this very mature market. Have we got a proposal that we have developed and have we put that to government? The answer is no. Would we discuss those matters as an executive? Of course we would. We are examining our operations all the time, as are other jurisdictions.

Mr BYRNE: So you have not received any direction to develop proposals?

Mr Anderson: I have not received a direction to develop a proposal.

Mr BYRNE: Thanks.

Mrs MILLER: I have some questions in relation to the answer that was given by the director-general about the proposed outsourcing of operational components such as patient transfers and community training programs. The first part of my question is to the minister. Considering that your government tends to think that privatising everything is the only way to go, do you think in this term that you will be directing your director-general to look at programs to outsource patient transfers or community training programs? That is the first part of the question.

The second part of the question is a follow-up in relation to your answer before about the unions. If Minister Springborg could settle the QNU issues with tens of thousands of nurses and if Minister Langbroek could settle the teachers issue with tens of thousands of teachers, what is wrong with you that you cannot settle the issue with United Voice? Haven't you got the ticker to sit down with the United Voice people and settle the issue with the ambulance union?

Mr DEMPSEY: In answer to the last question first, we are much earlier in the process. We will continue in a fair and reasonable way while respecting all the parties and the independence of the commission to get the best short-term and long-term results for the hardworking men and women within the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and the Queensland Ambulance Service. What did the other part of the question relate to?

Mrs MILLER: The first part of my question was in relation to the outsourcing of components such as patient transfers and community training programs. I asked you, if you were listening, whether or not in this term of government you believed you would ask the director-general and his officers to look at such outsourcing programs, considering it appears that your government considers privatisation is the way to go.

Mr DEMPSEY: I really do thank the member for Bundamba for that Dorothy Dixier in relation to privatisation and I note the hypocrisy exhibited by the member. Through you, Mr Chairman, it has obviously been the same with many other committees you have probably witnessed over the last couple of days. We are unlike the previous government in relation to privatisation. We can look at examples like Queensland Rail or electricity. We would actually go to the people of Queensland and be up front with them in relation to those particular issues. In relation to privatisation, as noted in the interim report for the Queensland Commission of Audit, Queensland already has two privately operated prisons. The Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre—

Mrs MILLER: No, I am asking about the ambulance service.

CHAIR: Member for Bundamba.

Mrs MILLER: I asked him a specific question.

CHAIR: Member for Bundamba!

Mrs MILLER: It is relevance.

CHAIR: We have been very lenient. You are over time for what we have been doing all day. We gave you the question. Allow the minister to answer the question or I will warn you.

Mrs MILLER: I would ask you to rule on relevance.

CHAIR: Okay, I warn you under standing order 185.

Mrs MILLER: Good.

CHAIR: You are now warned. Once more and you can take a walk. Minister, answer the question.

Mr DEMPSEY: Thank you, Mr Chairman. In relation to this particular question, it is important that the committee gets all the facts and details from the Service Delivery Statement. That is why it is important we allude to—as the director-general did in the previous questions—any issues relating to privatisation or any model within the correctional facilities. We do not want any unnecessary scaremongering or fears being put out into the community or to our correctional services officers. I must say that, since I came into this portfolio, I have been very impressed with those officers. I have visited Lotus Glen, the Southern Queensland Correctional Centre and the Brisbane Correctional Centre and I have been quite impressed. It has been an eye-opener for me to see the quality and professionalism of those staff. I have seen the nature of how they go about their business and the way they interact in often difficult circumstances with difficult prisoners within those jails. They do it to such a high standard.

That is why it is important that this question is answered in a thorough way to make sure that false presumptions are not put out to these highly skilled and hardworking individuals. I would also like those comments to go through the Commissioner of Queensland Corrective Services back to her officers to show them that this government is committed to those hardworking officers.

Also, as I have just said, the Queensland Commission of Audit has previously had two privately operated prisons. The Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre is an 890-bed remand centre in Wacol, which is next to the member's electorate, and it was commissioned in 1993. The Southern Queensland Correctional Centre was commissioned in January 2012 as a 300-bed replacement prison. Australia's first privately operated prison, the Borallon Correctional Centre, at Ipswich was decommissioned in January 2012 when the Southern Queensland Correctional Centre opened.

Approximately 22 per cent of Queensland's prisoner population is currently accommodated in privately operated prisons, down from 33 per cent in 1994-95. The *Report on Government Services 2012* showed Victoria in 2010-11 had a much higher proportion of prisoners accommodated in privately operated prisons at 33.4 per cent. The New South Wales government is implementing recommendations, and Queensland will be the last remaining state or territory in Australia delivering prison transport through the public sector. In relation to the efficiencies within the correctional centres, we are looking at different ways to increase those efficiencies. The Queensland government has not made any decisions regarding increasing involvement of private operators in the Queensland correctional system.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I call the member for Toowoomba North.

Mr WATTS: Minister, sticking with Corrective Services, I have a question about GPS tracking. Earlier today we discussed the changes we had made with repeat sex offenders. Can the minister inform the committee whether dangerous sex offenders can be tracked effectively on GPS? Can the minister confirm the government's commitment to tracking dangerous sex offenders?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for Toowoomba North for his question. Through you, Mr Chairman, it is very important that the community of Queensland has complete confidence in this process and we need to make sure any concerns are alleviated in a timely manner. I have had the opportunity to visit a number of operations and look at the procedures in relation to this particular aspect. I needed to alleviate any concerns I might have had. I also need to reinforce that Queensland Corrective Services particularly does this area very well.

I thank, again, the member for the question, and I thank the committee for their interest in GPS tracking technology of dangerous sex offenders. This government made a commitment to ensure dangerous sex offenders would be GPS tracked if a court bid to have them incarcerated did not succeed. You must understand the complexities involved when a person has served their term but is still deemed a threat to society. We are introducing a number of policies into the future in relation to the seriousness of sex offenders and making sure that the sentences reflect community expectations in that regard.

GPS monitoring is a useful tool which supports the strict supervision regime that Queensland Corrective Services has in place to manage dangerous sex offenders in the community. Queensland now has the most advanced GPS offender monitoring technology in Australia and New Zealand. This financial year, \$3.5 million has been allocated to support GPS technology used by Queensland Corrective Services for the monitoring of dangerous sex offenders on continuing supervision orders under the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003.

As at 4 October 2012, 79 offenders were being tracked 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The GPS devices are tamper resistant. Up to 30 kilos of force is required to break the straps. I have seen those devices and a number of other devices. I can certainly say that they work well and fit in with the current technology. Breaking or cutting the straps generates an immediate alert to the central monitoring station. The Queensland Police Service and the Queensland Corrective Services provide prompt information to the community through mainstream media such as the description, picture and basic offences of the DPSCA offenders who remove their device or commit significant breaches of their supervisory orders. This is a fine example of how to use technology to strengthen our ability to increase the safety for our community. I would like to pass over to the Commissioner of Corrective Services, Marlene Morison, to comment on this particular issue.

Commissioner Morison: GPS certainly does strengthen our ability to monitor these dangerous individuals within the community. It provides us with a very accurate method of defining exclusion zones and of ensuring that there is an alarm as an offender approaches an exclusion zone. It allows us to monitor curfew in a very effective way. It allows us to define inclusion zones—those areas in which we would expect to find the offender at particular times and an ability to have alarms when one steps outside of that. It also provides us with a wealth of intelligence in terms of what that individual is doing every hour of every day. We use that significantly in terms of our case management, monitoring and surveillance so that we can understand the patterns of behaviour, so that we can understand and interpret the sorts of risks that are there and so that we can intervene prior to risks emerging. It is not a silver bullet, but it is a very effective tool in the arsenal of correctional staff as they monitor these very difficult characters.

CHAIR: Minister, page 12 of the SDS states that the cost of containment per prisoner per day in 2011-12 was \$205. I note that prisons are expensive to run, but can the minister explain to the committee why the cost to house prisoners is so high and where Queensland sits in comparison with other states?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question and his support for the hardworking staff of the correctional facilities throughout Queensland, who do a magnificent job. They are supported by the chair and also by the government in ensuring that they meet the highest standards and expectations of not only the Queensland community but also those correctional facilities. I certainly do thank them for that.

Queensland delivers a cost-effective Corrective Services that does not compromise on safety or security. Last financial year, as per the Service Delivery Statements, the estimated cost per prisoner per day was \$210. Queensland's actual result for last financial year for cost per prisoner per day was \$205. Comparing this to other states and territories, Queensland remains a competitively cost-effective service. While comparisons with other states have not been released for 2011-12 or even 2010-11, the report on government services shows Queensland was the second most inexpensive area in terms of cost per person per day.

The department is driving down costs through reforms, setting Queensland's 2012-13 target estimate for cost per prisoner per day at \$199. We will continue to try to achieve other efficiencies in relation to delivery of this particular issue. However, the low cost of imprisonment per prisoner is a direct result of Queensland's modern prison infrastructure, which is designed to operate economically and requires a less labour intensive approach to staffing. Queensland's high-security prisons are managed close to capacity to assist in keeping down the cost per prisoner per day. As at 31 August 2012 there were 5,643 prisoners in Queensland custody while Queensland's current operational capacity—that is the number of beds open, staffed and operated—is 6,010. You can see that there are obviously plenty of beds there. I encourage people not to offend in the first place and they will not find themselves in a correctional centre. The Queensland correctional service was operating at 94 per cent capacity as at 1 July this year. The target estimate for 2012-13 for facility utilisation will remain between 85 per cent and 95 per cent.

Mr JUDGE: Regarding the finances, can you explain why the Department of Community Safety is forecasting a surplus in 2012-13 when there have been so many cuts made to departmental budgets?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for Yeerongpilly for the question. I understand a number of Corrective Services officers live and work within his community. He certainly makes sure that their concerns on a number of issues have come to me and I have addressed them. I look forward to continuing to work with the member for Yeerongpilly.

The department is forecasting an operating surplus of \$3.68 million in 2012-13. Surplus funds are used to repay debt and to help fund the department's capital investment requirements. For the 2012-13 financial year \$174.5 million has been allocated for capital acquisition. The operating surplus is one of the funding sources for this important program to work, to enhance and to maintain the department's service delivery capabilities and capacity. Operating surpluses are part of the fabric of managing the department's financial requirements. If it is all right with you, Mr Chairman, I would like to pass to Fiona Burbidge to give more detail.

Ms Burbidge: The department's estimated operating surplus of \$3.68 million for the 2012-13 financial year is derived from its total estimated income of \$1.88 billion offset by total estimated expenses of \$1.87 billion. The department's income not only funds our expenses but also provides an important funding source for our capital program. In this way the department differs from some other departments which are fully funded from the Consolidated Fund and whose capital programs may be funded solely from equity injections—or cash injections if you like—from the Consolidated Fund. The department's capital acquisitions for 2012-13 are estimated at \$174.5 million. In addition, \$4.8 million in capital grants are planned, bringing the total capital program funding requirement to \$179.3 million. I will give you an outline of the sorts of funding sources that we will use for our capital funding program in 2012-13. Equity injections will be received from the Consolidated Fund of around \$75 million, depreciation funding of \$201 million, proceeds from asset sales is only minor at \$4.5 million, and cash from current and past operating surplus funds of \$17.4 million about which we are really speaking now. These are offset by equity withdrawals of \$118.6 million whereby cash is returned to the Consolidated Fund.

We consider that depreciation funding is a source of funds for the capital program because income is raised to fund this non-cash depreciation expense. Therefore, the cash raised is available to fund capital expenditure. Loans were previously provided as a source of funds for the department's capital program. However, the department currently has no plans to seek further loan funding. This supports one of the government's fiscal principles to stabilise and then significantly reduce debt. The department currently only has one remaining fixed rate loan through Queensland Treasury Corporation. At the end of June that was just over \$3 million, but it will be fully repaid by September 2014. The department's current estimated funding levels cover its operating expenses and capital expenditure requirements throughout the forward estimates period. This supports the government's fiscal principle of achieving fiscal balance by 2014-15 because we are effectively achieving that now.

The department receives income from a range of sources including the Consolidated Fund. Service revenue of \$1.3 billion from the Consolidated Fund represents approximately 70 per cent of the department's total revenue. Service revenue is the primary source of funds for all divisions of the department except for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. For the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service the urban fire levy provides the majority of funding with service revenue accounting for 19 per cent, or \$98 million, of total QFRS income. Urban fire levies of \$350 million account for more than 18 per cent of total departmental revenue. User charges of \$181.6 million contribute approximately 10 per cent to the department's total income.

The department's operating surplus varies from year to year. The major impact on the department's surplus is the timing of grant payments. When the department receives grant funding directly from the Commonwealth, this must be recognised as revenue in the year in which it is received. This is the case regardless of when the funds are paid to the ultimate grant recipient. You will see in the budget papers that that is having an impact on the whole-of-government budget position as well.

The Department of Community Safety is a diverse organisation and, therefore, our funding of our services can deliver significantly across the department. For example, the Queensland Corrective Services is fully funded from the Consolidated Fund. This is in vast contrast to the way that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is funded due to its greater reliance on own source revenue.

CHAIR: Thank you. I call the member for Nudgee.

Mr WOODFORTH: My question pertains to prisoner projections. Minister, pages 5 and 20 of the SDS refer to capital investment in prison infrastructure. With the government announcing plans to make tougher sentences for criminals, will Queensland Corrective Services be prepared for possible increases in prisoner numbers?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question and his interest in a serious issue—this government takes it very seriously—of ensuring we have adequate correctional facilities. Achieving this ensures we are looking after not only the interests of Corrective Services staff but also the safety concerns of the wider community. This government makes no apologies for its tough-on-crime approach and will implement measures to reduce the rate of crime in the community. There are two key things to bear in mind in this regard. The Queensland prison system can and will continue to take all comers but, as I said before, I would appreciate if people make the positive decisions and do not go in there in the first place. Anyone who commits a crime and a court determines they should go to jail will be accommodated in one of Queensland's correctional centres. No-one can accurately predict the future. Governments forecast prisoner numbers based on the crime levels at the time and the government policy.

In June 2005, when there were 5,354 prisoners in Queensland, the former government forecast a 90 per cent increase in prison numbers by 2015. However, in June 2012 prison numbers had increased by 4.8 per cent, to 5,612, which was above the expectation of the previous government.

Crime rates in Queensland have been falling for more than a decade. Last year's Queensland Police Service Annual Statistical Review noted that over the past 11 years there has been a 30 per cent reduction in the rate of offending. The government's goal is not to have full jails but to have less crime. I thank the member for the question. For the expert's appraisal I would pass to the Queensland Corrective Services commissioner.

Commissioner Morison: In terms of technicalities, our prisoner projections are forecast annually by the department. They are based very much on crime levels at the time and current government policy. In February 2012 the projection estimated that the prisoner population would grow by approximately 345 in the six-year period to December 2017, essentially in line with projected population growth in Queensland based on previous government policy.

QCS also provides estimates on the impact any proposed legislation may have on prisoner numbers. As an example, projections based on every drug trafficker serving at least 80 per cent of their sentence before being eligible for parole would indicate an increase of approximately 170 prisoners in the next six years. Any additional prisoners will be distributed across the state as appropriate. As the minister said, we take all comers. We organise against the projections and against the policy and legislation of the government to ensure we can accommodate and manage those prisoners that are sent our way.

Mr BYRNE: Director-general, the budget highlights listed on page 5 of the DCS SDS provide \$330,000 for flood boats for the SES. I recall that 24 boats were purchased last year or before the election and there was an intention to purchase 32 more. At least that is the recollection I have. So why has the number of flood boats for delivery been reduced in this budget?

Mr Anderson: I will ask Bruce Grady from EMQ to answer that question. I am just not familiar with the exact level of last year's commitment. I am not sure that is quite right.

Mr Grady: We will need to take the detail of that on notice but we can probably do that during this session.

Mr BYRNE: Thank you. As a by-product of whatever that answer is, on the eve of the storm and cyclone season et cetera, do you have a sense of what areas of Queensland are underdone in terms of resources such as flood boats? What is that gap, not knowing necessarily what you are providing?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. For expert advice I will pass to Mr Grady in relation to that particular question. You may have to repeat the question.

Mr BYRNE: Accepting that we do not know exactly what the numbers are, there must be a deficiency somewhere in order to make an investment such as this. So what is your sense of what we are short of, leading into this storm and cyclone season?

Mr Grady: Specifically in relation to flood boats?

Mr BYRNE: Yes.

Mr Grady: I do not think there is a deficiency. I am just finding that out. We will deliver on the program as it was promised. We are just getting the detail of that for you now.

Mr BYRNE: Minister, are there any recommendations of the Floods Commission of Inquiry that have been problematic in terms of delivery or are not tracking according to intention?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for the question. In relation to the previous question, we have made a commitment of \$6.8 million over four years to the SES. Part of that will be in relation to other infrastructure and equipment. We have also allocated \$1.4 million for SES equipment. There is \$330,000 for flood boats, as you previously said, and \$350,000 for personal protective equipment. We have actually provided a funding increase to the SES. That is part of this government's endeavour to increase the operation of the SES and the Rural Fire Service within local communities and is part of empowerment. We are also looking at a number of ways to assist the SES within local areas. It is very important that they have ownership of those issues. The SES has done a remarkable job over the years in supporting a variety of communities in Queensland.

In relation to particularly the floods commission, this government committed to implementing all recommendations relevant to the state government made by the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry. Implementing the recommendations made by the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry is important to enhance Queensland's disaster preparedness ahead of the next wet season. You have probably heard the reports from the Bureau of Meteorology—we as a government receive briefings—in relation to a tropical season ahead with a number of severe storms and the possibility of a number of cyclones. So it is very important that we prepare as much as possible. It is the old saying that you hope for the best but prepare for the worst. We will continue in that endeavour to ensure all plans and requirements are in place.

The commission of inquiry delivered an interim report on 1 August 2011 which contained 48 recommendations relevant to the Department of Community Safety. The final report, delivered on 16 March 2012, contained 12 recommendations that were particularly relevant to DCS. During 2011-12,

DCS completed 46 of the 48 recommendations from the interim report and three of the 12 recommendations from the final report. It is important to know how this has continued to progress to a successful outcome.

The implemented recommendations strengthen the disaster management framework, associated training, emergency response, flood plain management and delivery of public education and safety materials. On that particular aspect, we are looking forward to a number of whole-of-government initiatives to ensure not only that we get the best value for money but also that we are prepared. I look forward to negotiations with the federal government on that particular issue. Obviously Queensland has received substantial funds from the federal government in support, and that needs to be recognised. I know that the emergency services are very thankful for that. We will continue to negotiate—I know that we will be competing with every other state of Australia—for funds to build in resilience and preparedness so that we are not patching up works after disasters.

A total of \$120 million was allocated over five years, from 2011-12 to 2015-16, to implement the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report recommendations. No additional funding has been required to implement the final report recommendations. Savings of \$878,000 made in 2011-12 were actually returned to the Consolidated Revenue Fund. However, in 2012-13, \$28.881 million is allocated across DCS to continue the implementation of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry recommendations. That will assist us to implement the remaining 11 recommendations. That will be completed in 2012-13. These cover the emergency response and land-use plans.

Emergency Management Queensland has been allocated \$21.6 million and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has been allocated \$7.2 million towards that. The \$7.2 million allocated is to increase the number of swiftwater technicians and provide swiftwater rescue training of auxiliary firefighters, as recommended in the report. This is very important to the future of Queensland. One only has to speak to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service commissioner to understand the diversity of tasks fire officers have to undertake. Whereas 20 years ago people mainly thought about house fires, fire officers now attend road accidents and attend to people on the side of our roads. And now swiftwater rescue has come to prominence. Queensland leads the way nationally in relation to that. That is why we have put particular emphasis on that area of operation. I will ask Bruce Grady if he would like to comment on this particular aspect. I know that he has a great passion for it.

Mr Grady: In terms of the recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry—I guess the question was particularly referenced in the cuts that were made to the budget—there has been no impact on the funding that was provided for the Floods Commission of Inquiry and the outputs that were required for the Floods Commission of Inquiry that have been affected by that. So all of those are still funded and ongoing and have been delivered or are being delivered.

CHAIR: Minister, would you like one minute just to sum up?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the committee for its deliberations. I acknowledge the importance of the Department of Community Safety to the whole of Queensland. We take this on as very serious business. It is very worthwhile and important to have this opportunity to reflect on the finances that every taxpayer in Queensland commits to this particular department. We might not like certain questions or have certain interests, but we are here to put these issues before the people of Queensland, to go through the budget in a thorough way.

I particularly thank Director-General Kelvin Anderson; Marlene Morison, commissioner for Queensland Corrective Services; Russell Bowles, commissioner of the Queensland Ambulance Service; Lee Johnson, the commissioner of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service; and Deputy Director-General Bruce Grady from EMQ. I also acknowledge all of the support staff, who have given a considerable amount of their time. I acknowledge Gary Mahon as well as my own staff. I thank the Parliamentary Service staff, who have been very patient here, as well as the Hansard reporters, who have certainly done a magnificent job. I always admit that I am not an academic but I will try my best in the interpretation of the English language.

In relation to any of the questions we have taken—

CHAIR: I will fill you in.

Mr DEMPSEY: We have an answer in relation to flood boats. Did you want us to speak on that or table it?

Mr Grady: I have the information.

CHAIR: You can table it.

Mr DEMPSEY: Okay. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR: I thank the committee staff. Our first meeting was at 8.30 this morning, so it has been a 13-hour day. I thank the staff of the opposition as well as all the committee members.

The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the corrective services and emergency services portfolio of the Minister for Police and Community Safety has expired. On behalf of the committee, Minister, I thank you. I thank your advisers for their attendance.

Minister, I remind you that answers to the questions taken on notice at today's hearing are to be provided to the research director by 5 pm on Monday, 15 October. The transcript of this hearing will be available on the Hansard page of the parliament's website within approximately two hours.

That completes the committee's hearings into the matters referred by the parliament. Before I conclude, on behalf of the committee I thank the Hansard staff for their attendance and assistance. I declare this public hearing closed.

Committee adjourned at 9.29 pm