

## THURSDAY, 18 JULY 2013

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

#### Estimates Committee Members

Mr IM Berry (Chair)  
Miss VM Barton  
Mr WS Byrne  
Mr SK Choat  
Mr AS Dillaway  
Mr TJ Watts  
Mr PW Wellington

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#### In Attendance

Hon. JP Bleijie, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

Mr D Fraser, Chief of Staff

#### **Department of Justice and Attorney-General**

Mr J Sosso, Director-General

Mr G Davis, Chief Financial Officer and Executive Director (Acting), Financial Services

#### **Crime and Misconduct Commission**

Dr K Levy, Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer (Acting)

Ms E Mendelle, Executive General Manager

#### **Electoral Commission of Queensland**

Mr W van der Merwe, Electoral Commissioner (Acting)

#### **Office of the Queensland Ombudsman**

Mr P Clarke, Queensland Ombudsman

#### **Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland**

Mr K Cocks, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner

#### **Office of the Public Trustee**


Mr P Carne, Public Trustee

#### **Legal Aid Queensland**

Mr A Reilly, Chief Executive Officer

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#### Committee met at 8.58 am

 **CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare the estimates hearing of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee open. On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Attorney-General, advisers and members of the public to this hearing. I am Ian Berry, member for Ipswich and chair of the committee. To my left is Mr Peter Wellington MP, member for Nicklin and deputy chair. The other committee members in attendance today are Miss Verity Barton MP, member for Broadwater; Mr Bill Byrne MP, member for Rockhampton; Mr Sean Choat MP, member for Ipswich West; Mr Aaron Dillaway MP, member for Bulimba; and Mr Trevor Watts MP, member for Toowoomba North.

The committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2013 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 the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and the Minister for Police and Community Safety. The committee will suspend proceedings for the following breaks: morning tea from 11.15 am to 11.45 am, lunch from 1.15 pm to 2 pm, afternoon tea from 3.45 pm to 4 pm and dinner from 6.15 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 and 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 agreed that the following non-committee members be given leave to participate in this hearing: Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Leader of the Opposition and member for Inala. The committee welcomes the attendance of the Leader of the Opposition here for this first session. The member for Rockhampton and the member for Toowoomba North have advised that they will be absent from the hearing at various periods throughout the day. I understand that my colleague Mr Aaron Dillaway, the member for Bulimba, will also be absent for a very short period in the course of the day. Mrs Jo-Ann Miller MP, member for Bundamba, and Mrs Desley Scott MP, member for Woodridge, will substitute for the member for Rockhampton throughout the day. Mr Michael Pucci, member for Logan, will substitute for the member for Toowoomba North in this evening's session.

I declare the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of the 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. Do you wish to do so?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, Mr Chair. I think we will get straight into estimates.

**CHAIR:** I call the Leader of the Opposition. Before the Leader of the Opposition opens, I might say that what I intend to do is operate on a 20-minute sequence and see how that proceeds.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you very much, Chair. Could I please call the Acting Chairperson of the Crime and Misconduct Commission, Dr Ken Levy. Good morning.

**Dr Levy:** Good morning.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I refer you to the CMC's staffing budget on page 47 of the SDS. I note in the 2012-13 budget there were 350 positions at the CMC. The 2012-13 estimated actual is 318 and the 2013-14 estimate is 320. Can you please advise the committee from what areas these positions have gone and what is the total number of positions that have now gone from the CMC from the last budget?

**Dr Levy:** I am not quite sure I can give you all of that detail, but the positions which have mostly been eradicated from the CMC establishment are positions which—on advice from the finance manager, who has given me some detail—for some years have been excess positions which have never been filled. In other words, the number of positions has been in excess of what the budget was. I understand that about two years ago the then chairman, after a consultancy in the CMC, decided that this had to be rationalised and a number of positions were just cut because there was never the budget for them anyway. The majority of the positions that have gone were because—and this analysis goes back over 10 years—at least from 2005 the numbers of positions clearly were in excess of what the budget could afford. They were just maintained there and held vacant, but the positions that were struck from the establishment were part of that filtering process. I am not aware what areas they came from. If you just give me a moment I will—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am interested in whether the job losses have come from the crime-fighting and prevention services or from the public sector integrity services.

**Dr Levy:** I think none went from Crime. If you just give me a moment, I will see what else I can find for you. My information is that there were 28 positions abolished. At the same time three were created. In other words, there were net 25 positions which were disestablished. Of those 25, 13 positions had individuals occupying positions so those people were made redundant. The other 12 positions were just disestablished with no other consequence.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** But they were not from the crime-fighting and prevention—

**Dr Levy:** Sorry, I was about to answer that part of your question. There were four positions from the research unit. There was one AO3 position in Crime. There were five positions in Intelligence. There were nine positions in Misconduct and Integrity.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Were they senior positions? For the sake of the committee, would we be able to have a list of those positions and levels?

**Dr Levy:** We can provide you with a list, yes.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you.

**Dr Levy:** For your information, they range from mostly the PO5 to AO6-7 levels. There are also three positions from what is called the Office of the Commission. I cannot quite tell you what the Office of the Commission is, but I think it is only support for the commissioners. There were three positions abolished from there. The remaining positions were business analysts and facilities and procurement managers. That is the effect of them.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you very much. I refer to note No. 3 on page 48 of the SDS, which states—

In 2013-14, new strategies will be developed to improve the timeliness of our misconduct investigations.

Could you please outline to the committee what some of those improvements might be?

**Dr Levy:** I cannot perhaps give you an accurate history of all that was planned when that was written, but I can say that the present position is that the time lines are to be reduced, particularly for long hearings. This is something that I have been rather sensitive about: that long and sensitive hearings should have some oversight at a number of stages so they are met within a reasonable time. For example, the performance standard of the New South Wales system, about which I have made some inquiries, is 12 months. We have some, as you know, which have gone longer than that. Sometimes there are unforeseen circumstances, but in any event New South Wales have done them in 12 months and nothing has exceeded 12 months, even the ones with public hearings. So that is our aim: to have greater oversight and greater checks and balances even by the commission or else perhaps independent checks and balances for the most sensitive ones. There is only a small percentage of those, of course, but they are the ones that blow out.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** In relation to the job cuts you just outlined, do you believe they are likely to have any impact on the time lines of these investigations or do you believe there are enough staff now to meet the timeliness of those investigations?

**Dr Levy:** My sense of that is, no, those cuts should not impact on that, mainly because many of those jobs were not filled anyway. They were positions that were abolished but they were not filled. The other aspect about it is this: we have multidisciplinary teams. Some of those perhaps we will be looking at as a result of some of the recommendations of both the PCMC and the independent panel report. There are some other aspects of work flow that we will look at. We have not quite got to those yet, but that is on the agenda. So there are probably some efficiency measures we will find as well.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** In relation to the timeliness of investigations, I note that Michael Caltabiano, the former director-general of Transport and Main Roads, was stood down I think on 25 October last year. Are you able to update the committee in terms of the progress of that investigation or when there is likely to be an outcome? Or has the CMC concluded its investigation?

**Dr Levy:** Perhaps all I can formally say at this point is that it is almost finalised. It is in its final stages, let me put it that way.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** So it is almost finalised?

**Dr Levy:** It is in the final stages. You realise, of course, that is a complex matter which has some other matters which are being looked at concurrently, but it is in its final stages.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Are we looking at a month or two months?

**Dr Levy:** If I say a month undoubtedly Murphy's law will operate and I will not meet that. I think in a couple of months time we should be expecting to draw it to a close.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you. In relation to the Criminal Proceeds Confiscation (Unexplained Wealth and Serious Drug Offender Confiscation Order) Amendment Bill, I refer to page 46 of the SDS, which states—

In 2013-14 the priorities for the CMC are to:

- gain maximum impact from proceeds of crime activity consistent with available resources ...

At the public hearing on the bill Mr Wellington asked Ms Florian about resourcing. He said—

If I can use simple language, what you are saying is that you do not have the staff capacity to do the backlog of work which has already been referred to you and you need additional financial support from the state government to be able to undertake the work that this legislation is proposing.

Ms Florian's response was—

The Western Australian proceeds of crime team, as I have indicated, has a staff of 29 FTEs to do just two parts of a much larger thing that we would be doing if this bill is passed. Resourcing will obviously be an issue.

How is this resourcing issue to be addressed?

**CHAIR:** Before you answer that, do you accept that statement?

**Dr Levy:** Yes. The current answer to that is this: the day before yesterday Mr Scott, who is the head of the Crime division, and I met with the lady who runs the Proceeds of Crime unit. Of course the act has been proclaimed, but it has not yet commenced. When it does commence it will apply to any matter that the police deal with from that date, so it does not matter when the offence occurred. It has not yet commenced, but whenever it commences the general feel of the officers in the commission is that in this financial year it is unlikely to be of very much significance. We may have a number of convictions and a couple of matters to follow up, but the officer in charge of the Proceeds of Crime unit does not expect that that is going to create very much workload for us. That is not to say it will always be like that. If the workload is such, though, that we require extra resources, that would become evident fairly quickly in which case then a submission would be made to the government about the state of that under-resourcing in the usual process. Obviously if those things are not fixed within a matter of weeks they go through the CBRC process. There was no alarm raised with me that somehow we would not be able to handle that.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I wish to put a follow-up question to the acting chairman of the CMC. You answered an earlier question to the Leader of the Opposition in relation to staffing. Are there any vacancies in the CMC at the moment? If so, what positions?

**Dr Levy:** That is a question of some particular detail, Mr Wellington. I am not quite sure I have the immediate answer to that. Ms Mendelle might be able to answer that.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I am happy if she would like to answer that.

**Ms Mendelle:** I cannot provide a comprehensive answer but I know that certain positions in Research and Prevention are vacant pending the various reviews, recommendations and the implementation panel's response. We are filling vacant positions in the police contingent, and that takes significant time, as you would appreciate. We are slowly filling those positions as well. I cannot give you a more comprehensive answer, but I can ask the Attorney-General to take it on notice.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Yes, I am happy for that to be taken on notice. I have a follow-up question—

**CHAIR:** Mr Attorney, do you agree to the question being taken on notice?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** That is fine.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I have a follow-up question in relation to the staffing of the specialist investigative units. I understand these are teams, not just one officer. They have forensic accountants and specialist investigators in a unit. Can you advise how many of those specialist units are actually fully staffed at the moment? Are there any specialist units which are only partly staffed and, if so, what parts are you waiting to have staffed?

**Dr Levy:** Without giving actual numbers, there are four groups of multidisciplinary teams. Each of them has police, at least one lawyer, usually a financial investigator and a civilian investigator. Almost all of those positions are presently filled. There is a couple of vacancies. I cannot tell you in which teams, but there is a small number of vacancies. Sometimes that is because of a police officer, for example, being posted elsewhere and another one taking that duty. There is no significant number. They are virtually mostly all filled. Again, I could feed back to you perhaps the numbers and the proportion if you like.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I would be happy for that to be taken on notice. The final question on this topic is in relation to the workload of these specialist units. Are you able to give any advice as to the backlog of work that is currently waiting for them to even start? How many files would they be working on at the moment? Can you give any indication at all in relation to the workload that the units have?

**Dr Levy:** By specialist units—

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Yes, the specialist units—

**Dr Levy:**—which are you referring to there, though?

**Mr WELLINGTON:** The specialist units—

**Dr Levy:** Are you talking about the Crime investigators doing covert work or are you talking about the Misconduct people who have professional specialists in there or Proceeds of Crime, which is—

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I am happy to hear what information you can provide.

**Dr Levy:** If I am wrong, Mr Scott will correct me. There is a large number of police involved with much of the Crime division. They are mostly senior people and are highly specialised; many of them have been there for many years in fact. Most of those people are fully occupied and there is not really a backlog as such. There are operations which they do which are approved and they run through to conclusion. They are monitored every week. I do not think there is a backlog as such in Crime. In Misconduct there is a number of matters which have been on the books for some years. Most of those have been the subject of correspondence with the PCMC about those long delays. On the face of it some of those delays almost look unjustifiable; some go back five years. If you have a look at them—and I have—many of those delays in those matters are because there has been correspondence, which we have had to answer, from the PCMC because people continue to write and then they write to the PCMC. There is a backlog and there are some current matters, but I do not have figures to answer that specifically. I am fairly familiar with that. Apart from those ones with the long tail that go to the PCMC—

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Finally, the reason I ask is that we have some high profile people who have been referred to the CMC for investigation: councillors, politicians, senior bureaucrats and high profile people in the community. One of the most common complaints I hear is about how long it takes for these high profile matters to be investigated. Are you assuring us that it is not a resourcing issue for these matters to be investigated, finalised and a report completed?

**Dr Levy:** In relation to those particular matters, I am aware that those ones do take a long time. It is not because of resourcing but sometimes those ones—and I guess we all know the ones you are referring to—do get off the trail a little bit because some people make other allegations along the way or we are also responding to questions from the PCMC. It is not so much a resourcing issue, but certainly the time line to deal with those is an issue that is of concern to me and to the commission. I was referring earlier to the fact that the commission is going to monitor much more closely this small number of very sensitive matters. That is part of the issue that the commissioners are going to keep under control. I am familiar with what you are referring to. It is not a resourcing issue. There could well be also some efficiency measures. As I said, we will look at some processes and procedures a little further down the track.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** I will keep on the same theme with regard to the CMC. Attorney-General, good morning. I was wondering if you could please outline the government's response to both the Callinan-Aroney report and the PCMC report No. 90 relating to the inquiry into the CMC's release and destruction of the Fitzgerald inquiry documents.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. This was a serious matter that was raised some months ago in the parliament. We had already announced—in fact, one year ago—the Callinan-Aroney review of the CMC. I thought it was important to have an independent review of the CMC. So I engaged the services of former High Court judge the Hon. Ian Callinan and highly respected law professor Nicholas Aroney to conduct a very broad-ranging—with broad terms of reference—review of the CMC. In the process of conducting that review—in fact, towards the end of the review—it became apparent that the CMC, through what appears on the admission of the former chairman of the CMC to be its own maladministration, both shredded sensitive Fitzgerald documentation and allowed documentation to be accessed that ought not have been. These things were meant to have a life span of secrecy of up to 100 years which they did not have. So documentation was obtained. We then went through a very sensitive process in the parliament. I was

requested by the former chair of the CMC to urgently rush through legislation. We took the view that we would make sure that we did not rush anything. We looked at all the issues at hand. With respect to that issue I think enough was said at the time with respect to the CMC.

The future is bright for the CMC. We have had a very extensive review through the Callinan-Aroney review. At the same time we have had the PCMC conduct its own inquiry in relation to that. I think that was a great part of the democracy and parliamentary process in Queensland. For the first time we actually saw the PCMC conduct an open hearing—in fact, in this very chamber—where the CMC was opened and light was allowed to shine in. I think it was a great opportunity for the CMC to answer all of these questions but also for the public to get an insight into what happens at the CMC and the administration of the CMC.

So where do we go from now following those two recommendations? We have now released our responses. Some of the responses, although we have accepted some in principle on some occasions and we accepted some outright, still require further work. So where we go to now is we have the implementation panel and it has met on numerous occasions. The director-general of Justice and Attorney-General, the acting chair of the CMC and also the Public Service Commissioner and the director-general of Premier and Cabinet form the implementation panel. It is very much now about engaging with the CMC to make sure that we do have a strong independent watchdog in this state: one that has its priorities right, one that has sufficient resources required to do its job, one that is not inefficient but also one that has the light shone in so Queenslanders know what is happening in the CMC.

**Mr WATTS:** Attorney, good morning. Further to your answer, what steps have been taken to ensure that the release and destruction of Fitzgerald inquiry documents will have a minimal impact? What specific steps have been taken to prevent such an oversight happening in the future?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. A couple of things we did through the legislation in the parliament included prohibiting the publication of the specific documentation that was released to the world at large or to the particular individuals who accessed the information. One of the initial steps was that the parliament passed legislation to put in place a period of time. I then thanked parliament because they extended that period of time that we are in now where there is a prohibition on the publication of that certain documentation. I thank the CMC as well because they have now put their own internal mechanisms in place with their own restricted access period. They are reviewing all of the Fitzgerald documentation.

One of the recommendations of the Callinan-Aroney review that we have not accepted is in terms of requiring all the people who accessed—lawfully at the time—the information from the CMC to hand back to the CMC. I have not accepted that because I am of the view that the individuals who accessed the information did so lawfully and they were entitled to do so. However, the implementation panel is looking at the situation whereby if the information in one's hand is sensitive in terms of one's personal safety, then there may be requirements to get particular information back or for parliament to consider in the future a more permanent ban or the prohibition on the publication of certain documents in the future.

We quite strongly held the view that the information was obtained lawfully at the time, although it was fundamentally an administrative blunder of the organisation charged with the largest responsibility of upholding integrity, accountability and transparency in the state. But I think the future is bright for the CMC, and I thank Dr Ken Levy, the acting chair of the CMC, for the work that he is doing on the implementation panel to ensure we are bringing all of the CMC's staff with us on this journey. At the end of the day, for the sake of all Queenslanders we do want a body that will not only continue to perform its major functions in terms of crime prevention and in relation to unexplained wealth but also take action against corrupt public servants or politicians.

**Mr WATTS:** Just further to the CMC, could you compare and contrast the budgets for 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The CMC's operating budget for the 2011-12 financial year was \$50.55 million—an increase of \$1.99 million, or 4.1 per cent, on the previous year. This increase is mainly due to the use of cash reserves of \$1.5 million and enterprise bargaining increases. The operating budget for the CMC for the 2012-13 financial year was \$50.43 million—a decrease of \$0.12 million, or 0.24 per cent, on the previous year. As I explained in the estimates last June and throughout the year, this decrease is mainly due to funding received for enterprise bargaining increases in staff redundancies, offset by a CBRC reduction in grant funding of

\$0.46 million. The CMC's operating budget for the 2013-14 financial year was \$49.6 million—a decrease of \$0.83 million, or 1.65 per cent, on the previous year. This decrease is mainly due to the CBRC reduction in grant funding of \$0.85 million, offset by a small increase in other income. The overall budget decrease of \$0.83 million from 2012-13 reflects government's fiscal policy.

I might add, just in terms of the earlier discussion in relation to staff: it has always been my view—and members of the committee who were here last year will know that it has been my view for some time—that the resources of the CMC were sufficient. We had the debacle last year when the former chair said that because of government fiscal policies there were reductions of over 30 staff in the CMC. The PCMC have shone the light on that issue and essentially said that the CMC were sort of putting in reserve spots which were not filled and then classifying them as staff that were actually cut when in fact there were no people in any positions there. The chairman referred earlier to it being disestablished. So I do thank the PCMC for shedding light on that particular issue as well.

**Mr CHOAT:** In a similar vein to the member for Toowoomba North's questions, and with regard to earlier questions asked by the Leader of the Opposition, could the Attorney-General outline what effect any changes to the CMC's budget have had on staff numbers?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. In 2012-13, the original balance of the retained earnings in the CMC budget was \$1.81 million. \$1.13 million of this amount was returned to consolidated revenue per a CBRC decision, leaving a balance of \$0.46 million. In 2012-13 the total reduction in grant funding for the CMC was \$0.46 million. This is 0.91 per cent of the CMC's total operating budget of \$50.43 million. This \$0.46 million reduction resulted in a decrease in the employee salaries budget of \$0.36 million and a decrease in the supplies and services budget of \$0.1 million. As a result of the changes to the CMC's budget in 2012-13, 13 permanent employees—head count—were made redundant. As at 31 May 2013, the CMC had 315 full-time-equivalent permanent positions.

**Mr CHOAT:** With regard to the budget, Attorney-General, I am specifically interested in the total amount of money the CMC restrained in the last financial year.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The CMC restrained \$17.1 million, from my recollection, out of a target of \$18 million.

**Mr CHOAT:** What is the targeted amount that the CMC wishes to restrain for this financial year?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** \$18 million.

**Mr CHOAT:** Do you expect that the government's tough new proceeds of crime legislation will increase those amounts of restrained and forfeited funds from offenders into the future?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The Crime and Misconduct Commission has administered the civil confiscation scheme for Queensland—which is contained in chapter 2 of the Criminal Proceeds Confiscation Act—since its introduction in 2002. As at 30 June 2013, the CMC has restrained property to the net value of \$162.93 million and has returned \$55.52 million in proceeds of crime to consolidated revenue, a sum which may be used for the benefit of the broader Queensland community. Moneys returned to government as a consequence of these confiscation activities significantly exceed the cost to the government of the proceeds of crime teams in the CMC and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. The new provisions will further enhance the CMC's ability to remove the financial gain and increase the financial loss associated with illegal activity in Queensland, making Queensland hostile to the presence of serious and organised crime.

Being tough on crime is one of the strong commitments that the government gave at the 2011 election. We were going to target the Mr Bigs of the underworld. Generally we find that it is not the low-level suppliers on the streets; you have to follow the money trail. We will be making sure that the CMC has the necessary powers. I expect that legislation to commence in about September of this year, and I then suspect that we will start seeing the CMC and the police work together to make sure that we do go after the Mr Bigs of the underworld in the organised crime sphere.

**CHAIR:** Mr Attorney-General, if I might change the direction of the questioning and perhaps speak about the matter of industrial relations, particularly in the building and construction industry. Could you please update this committee on the initiatives being undertaken by the department to address union militancy and unlawful industrial action, particularly in relation to that industry?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the chair for the question. Again, this is a matter that I have been speaking about quite a lot recently with respect to the establishment of the Building and Construction Compliance Branch in Queensland. It is no secret that the Queensland government have four pillars of our economy that we want to strengthen, and we want to have Queensland business and the community with us on this journey: agriculture, the resource sector, construction and tourism.

In terms of construction forming one of the key pillars of the Queensland economy, we do have issues right around the state with union militant activity holding up work sites and construction sites—people walking off the job and shutting down sites. The government have established new guidelines in Queensland so that any major contractors wanting to do government work and tender for government work have to abide by certain guidelines. These have now been published and are effective from 1 July this year.

We have set up the BCCB, which is very similar to the Commonwealth ABCC branch, and the major contractors in the country have certainly appreciated it. It is about making sure that both unions and major contractors are signing fair deals, but it is also about making sure that we end the thuggery and bullying tactics that are engaged by the unions, particularly on work sites in Queensland. For a quite recent example we only have to look at the Queensland Children's Hospital site. The cost to the taxpayer of Queensland of that site being shut down was about \$7 million—more so to the contractor, of course. That has to end in Queensland. Every time these sites are shut down the economy in those areas stops. People are not being employed and the wheels stop moving. So we are very serious about this.

We are now in the process of engaging the head of the BCC branch, which will be in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, and I very much look forward to that branch going out there. They will be visiting work sites and speaking to union representatives, major contractor associations and all government departments to make sure that everyone who wants to tender for government work is abiding by these particular guidelines.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Can the Attorney-General update the committee on the public holiday changes throughout 2013, with the impending birth of the future heir, and how these will benefit both industry and the workers of Queensland?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a two-part question, one part of which relates to the changes the government made with respect to spacing out the holidays across the year—something I think Queenslanders have embraced. Everyone knew the issue. Early in the year we went from Christmas and New Year to Australia Day, Anzac Day, Labour Day and Easter. There has always been a high percentage of public holidays in the first half of the year. We had the Queen's Birthday holiday in June but there would be nothing for the rest of the year.

We set about making sure the good workers of Queensland could actually enjoy family time throughout the year, with public holidays not necessarily concentrated in the first half of the year, so we did move Labour Day to October. We have kept Labour Day, so the tradition of Labour Day and the marches can continue in October. The public holiday will be there so that people can have a free day. We have moved the Queen's Birthday holiday back to June.

Having just been through June, I was very pleased when the Premier announced last weekend that he had given me the special responsibility of coordinating activities across the state relating to the impending birth of the royal baby, the future heir to Queensland. That is a position that I have taken on with great excitement, and we are currently in the planning stages so that, upon the announcement of the birth of the royal baby, Queensland will be able to celebrate in the necessary fashion. I am particularly pleased that the royal baby was not born last night, because, if it was a prince, I could not get agreement from anyone, including the Lord Mayor, to fly blue in any part of Queensland last night! So I am very happy that the Maroons won last night and that we can celebrate with maroon on the Story Bridge and in other places. Now we can await the arrival of the baby, and we will make some announcements in the future about how we can honour that birth.

**Mr WATTS:** If I could ask you to turn your attention to workplace health and safety, would you be able to update the committee on the Zero Harm at Work Leadership Program and how the Newman government is encouraging industry best practice in workplace health and safety?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. This is a very important government project. It was started in 2009 with some 30 members. I am pleased to advise that it has now grown to over 270 member organisations. I have been particularly happy to attend Zero Harm at Work breakfast seminars, where industries come together and plan to make better workplaces. With



workplace health and safety, at all times we are looking at trying to prevent injuries. I am very pleased to say that industries right across Queensland are joining that force. They want injury prevention in their workplaces. Also at these Zero Harm at Work forums industries share ideas and discuss things that have or have not worked.

For instance, at one of the breakfasts I attended, if my memory serves me correctly, we were told that Concrete Australia had gone through a process with their cement trucks going into the workshops. The workers were climbing onto the bonnet of the trucks and servicing the trucks from a position on the wheel rim. They had to then lean over to service them, and it was difficult. They often had injuries because the workers would fall off the wheel rim onto the ground and hurt themselves. What they came up with in their workshop—it has obviously been progressed out to other workshops—is a hoist mechanism. The worker can now actually be hoisted, and this enables them to sit and work from a position above the motor so there is no risk of falling.

There are other things that they have done on trucks. My father was an Esso truck driver in New South Wales, so I come from a trucking family. He, like all truckies, liked stainless steel on the trucks, including the sidesteps. Of course, stainless steel is dangerous when it is wet. It is slippery, shiny and hot. I am advised that truckies were very reluctant to put fluorescent nonslips on the sidesteps. However, through negotiation and colour changes and things, they have and their injury statistics have actually fallen—decreased—and that is all we can ask for. So industry is very much behind the Zero Harm at Work leadership forums that go right across the state and will continue in the future, with over 270 industrial organisations being members.

**CHAIR:** I call the Leader of the Opposition and member for Inala.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Attorney-General, I refer to page 30 of the SDS relating to cash flows from investing activities. In relation to the outflows, it says that payments for property, plant and equipment and intangibles had roughly \$105 million allocated in the 2012-13 budget and then the estimated actual is \$46,982,000. I was just wondering if you could explain the variation there please.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. It is probably a question better directed at the director-general, if he can assist, or the financial officers to get that explanation for you. If they are unable to do it, we will of course in the short period of time get that information for you. If you are happy to divert to my director-general for some information on that, I will hand over to him.

**Mr Sosso:** I am just getting the information for you, member. If you want to move on to the next question, I should have it in about three or four minutes.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Okay. Attorney, I refer to page 14 of the SDS. Can you tell us the scale of the backlog of civil and criminal law cases in 2012-13 and explain why the estimated actual is almost double the target?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. I recall that I said in parliament some weeks ago that we actually have our civil and criminal matters, both in the District Court and Supreme Court, at record highs. Our Supreme Court actuals in terms of their clearance rates is upwards of 125 per cent, which is a record high. Our actuals with the District Court is, from memory, around 116 per cent, so our courts are actually performing quite well. The heads of those jurisdictions—both the Chief Justice and the Chief Judge—are content with the existing judicial resources. As I said in parliament, our courts are doing a fantastic job in dispensing justice according to law. There will always be major cases and big cases in Queensland that courts will take a little longer to get through, but in the main the courts seem happy with—and I am quite content with—their clearance rates at the moment.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Attorney, I refer to the SDS at page 5 in relation to Coroner waiting times. What are the current waiting times for finalisation of coronial matters across the state by region?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We will get you the regional breakdown, but I will make a couple of points. The first is that we now have every area of Queensland covered by a Coroner. Up until we were elected in 2012, there was no Central Coroner and I was very pleased to head to the central region and announce a new Coroner, Mr O'Connell. That Coroner has been in operation for about a year now, so I think that is very much a positive in terms of the resources of the coronial office having every area of Queensland now covered by a full-time Coroner, and of course magistrates can act as Coroners in other circumstances as well.

As to the particular areas that the member was referring to in terms of a breakdown of the backlogs, I do not have those off the top of my head. We are happy to get them. The ideal world would be to have backlogs in all courts and all tribunals, QCAT and the Coroner office cleared as soon as they can. There are, however, matters that have to be addressed. For instance, I have the reserve power to direct inquests, which of course impacts on the resources of the Coroner. I have done that on three occasions now, one of which was the direction for the Wirraway inquest into the flight that went down on Maroochydore Beach, the second was of course the Murphys Creek murders of the two nurses and the more recent one was the death of the three young men from electrocution under the Rudd government's insulation scheme. I directed the Coroner to conduct an inquest. When I make these directions, it of course will impact on other resources. But we do it because I take into consideration a few things, one of which is the families who write to me and plead with me, like the Fullers. The Fullers were left going to the District Court because the previous government refused to do any coronial inquest. The Fuller family lost their son Matthew in a tragic accident caused essentially by the Rudd government insulation scheme. The Fullers lost their son Matthew and the former government and the former Attorney refused to hold an inquest. While the former Labor government federally and the former Labor state government went back and forward as to who was responsible for fixing the mess, two additional people died in Queensland. As soon as I became Attorney-General I ordered the inquest because I heard that the Fuller family were making application to the District Court to get it to order an inquest because former Attorney-General Cameron Dick refused to do it. I think Queenslanders would expect and understand that if there are potential additional resource implications on the office of the Coroner because of those issues—for instance, the Fuller family—then I think that is completely understandable.

Mr Chairman, just before we move on, the director-general has the answer to the previous question, if you like.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you.

**Mr Sosso:** Thank you for your indulgence. The principal reason for the reduction from \$105 million to \$46 million was that the Queen Elizabeth II Courts of Law building came in under budget, basically \$45 million under budget. It was budgeted at approximately \$600 million. It came in at \$555 million, so there was a saving of approximately \$45 million to the taxpayer. So the reason that the figure has been decreased from \$105 million to \$46,982,000 is that the Queen Elizabeth II Courts of Law building came under budget by \$45.982 million. Approximately \$600 million was allocated for the construction of that complex. It came in at approximately \$555 million, so the bulk of that money comes from that saving from that building.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** A great initiative under the former Labor government.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** And good savings by this government to come in under budget.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Attorney. Is there another question from the Leader of the Opposition and member for Inala?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes, we have quite a few.

**CHAIR:** Indeed.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** My question is to the Attorney. I refer to the SDS at page 4 where you are proposing a new model for the Legal Practitioner Interest on Trust Accounts Fund to commence in 2014-15. How will this new model that you are developing strengthen the delivery of legal assistance services across the state?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question; a few ways. The model that we had was so outdated that all of the service providers that were getting the money did not like the system. They were getting annual funding, but what was happening was they were getting notified after the financial year had commenced under the previous government of what their money would be for that financial year. We had a situation where community legal centres had to sack people or people left of their own accord because they actually did not know whether they had funding for that financial year. I immediately set about trying to fix this issue. In the first year we were unfortunately one week late because we were elected in March and of course the financial year started in July, so we were one week late in granting the annual funding. But we immediately set about doing this with the good organisation of QAILS, the peak body for community legal centres. We went around to a lot of the community legal centres over the past 12 months. We conducted a review which was made up of community legal centres, the Bar Association, the Queensland Law Society and they came up with a new model, which is a fantastic model that we have accepted, endorsed and released. They will get

triennial funding. So no longer will they now be waiting to see if their jobs are secure. They will have triennial funding—three-year funding—for their specific legal centres. I make sure that in every jurisdiction and every electorate I go to right around the state I always try to get to the community legal centres. They form an important part of our legal structure for those disadvantaged in our community and will continue to do so, if not even more so than they have in the past, under this government.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Attorney. I refer to the answer to question on notice No. 4 in relation to an additional \$2 million that the Queensland government through the Department of Justice and Attorney-General has provided over four years to six specialist victim support services. I am particularly interested as a former minister for disabilities in the \$295,000 to Women Working with Women with an Intellectual Disability's sexual assault prevention program to support its growing client base, the majority of whom are women with an intellectual disability. Could you please give the committee a bit more detail about that program in particular?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. I make the point that this was \$2 million that was not available under the Labor government; this was additional funding that we went to an election with. We want Queensland to be the safest place to raise a child and we said that we would give an additional \$2 million to victims of crime groups right around Queensland. We have an open process whereby people and organisations apply for that and we wanted to make sure that we could spread the money as best as we could. The member is right in terms of the group that she mentioned. The extended funding of \$2 million through DJAG has given \$2 million over four years to six specialist victim support services. They include funding of \$295,100 to Women Working with Women which, as the honourable member said, is the organisation working with people with intellectual disabilities. WWILD's sexual assault prevention program supports its growing client base, the majority of whom are women with an intellectual disability. WWILD is making a tangible difference to the lives of women who are within a highly vulnerable cohort by providing counselling and information support assistance in court and referral and support to other key agencies, including medical professionals and police.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I refer the Attorney-General to his answer to question on notice No. 1 and ask: has a site on the Sunshine Coast or Fraser Coast area been chosen for the proposed boot camp? If not, when will the community be consulted about the proposed location?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. The government is committed to restoring faith in the youth justice system across Queensland. We announced an additional three boot camps—Rockhampton, Townsville and the Fraser Coast-Sunshine Coast. We are in the process now of the tendering process. We have met with organisations. If the member has asked about consultation, I am a Sunshine Coast member as well and I have been to a few Sunshine Coast events where particular organisations that are doing a great job on the Sunshine Coast have come up to thank me for the opportunity to have a say and to put a tender in. The tenders have not come to me yet. We have an independent process in place. I expect those to be in and announced in the next two weeks.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Will the department require the support of the local council for the location of that proposed boot camp?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I find that everywhere I go in Queensland with the sites that we have chosen for the boot camps—the additional three—there certainly is council support. I am not sure what the member is suggesting. If he is suggesting that the Sunshine Coast Regional Council do not support a boot camp, I am not aware of that. I can assure the member that when I go around Queensland to places where we have not announced a boot camp members are requesting a similar type of boot camp operation in a lot of other electorates around Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Attorney, I can pass on to you that Mayor Pisasale in Ipswich is more than happy to have a boot camp.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** So is Mayor Pam Parker.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Just to clarify, will the Attorney-General require support from the local council?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am not sure what the member is getting at. If the issue is that we establish a boot camp and the local government, for whatever reason, is against a boot camp but the community is not, then we will push ahead, because we are doing it because the community wants us to do it.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Can the Attorney-General advise what the criteria are that must be met for the successful site?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** There are two different boot camps. One is a sentence youth boot camp and the other is an early intervention youth boot camp. The one at the Fraser Coast-Sunshine Coast is an early intervention boot camp. So very much it is an open tender process whereby figures are not mentioned. People or organisations can come up with a plan. Bearing in mind that a lot of groups right around Queensland are already doing these as we speak, they would just like government assistance or more government assistance to be able to do them. You would find that in most electorates around Queensland there is some form of community youth intervention, early intervention program operating by boot camp by another name, if I can use that expression. So they have to show a dedication to fixing the issues. The groups have to show that they have the capabilities, the staff and the knowledge, and it would be helpful if they have runs on the board.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Mr Chairman, I have a further question. Page 4 of the Service Delivery Statement states that the department will continue to—

... implement savings allocated through rigorous review of services, particularly to back office services and processes.

I ask: what services or processes are still being investigated for privatisation, outsourcing or closing?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. The government will consider anything that saves taxpayers' money. If there are more efficient and better ways to do things in this state utilising the scarce resources of taxpayers' money, we will.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Reference is made to the QCAT service. Is there a review and audit being undertaken in relation to the skills of the people involved in QCAT? I note in your Service Delivery Statement at page 16 you refer to 70 per cent overall client satisfaction with the service provided. I assure the minister that that certainly is not the feedback I am getting from my constituents. In the last fortnight I met with two constituents who were both disgusted and angry with the decisions that were made and alarmed at how the adjudicator could make such a decision. I ask: how is that client satisfaction rate that is referred to in the Service Delivery Statement at page 16 calculated?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. There are two points. Firstly, the member, as I understand, is a former lawyer, so I would have thought the member would have a little more respect for the separation of powers in terms of bringing to this table issues of decisions made by independent tribunals, a quasi-court. Secondly, there is a statutory review being undertaken of QCAT at the moment and certainly when we appoint people to QCAT—as sessional members, ordinary members or adjudicators—we are always looking for the most experienced people. My appointments will certainly be based on merit. I cannot speak for the previous appointments.

There have been decisions of QCAT that I myself have in fact appealed as Attorney-General. We have two on foot. One I will not speak about because it is still before the court. The other one that I joined as *amicus curiae*—a friend of the court—was the Moranbah Hotel decision. The motel owner had kicked out the lady conducting prostitution services in the motel room. The person then took the owner to QCAT and they were found against pursuant to the Anti-Discrimination Act on appeal. The owner of the motel then appealed to the Court of Appeal and, as *amicus curiae*, I joined as a friend of the court and supported that application. The Court of Appeal found in favour of the motel operator, but just in case there was an issue parliament did change the legislation to ensure that the rights of the motel owner are upheld.

**Mrs MILLER:** Attorney, I refer to page 10 of the SDS and the reference to the Liquor, Gaming and Fair Trading service area and its role in implementing initiatives that minimise harm and impact on community amenity from liquor and gambling. I note that you performed the official opening of the NightSafe premises operated by ChaplainWatch in Fortitude Valley on 4 July this year. Your support for ChaplainWatch has been ongoing and you also attended a fundraising function that they held on 6 September last year. Whilst I am sure your attendance at the function was no doubt appreciated by the chaplains, did you ever make it clear to ChaplainWatch that you would be claiming back the \$50 donation you gave them as a ministerial expense, thereby effectively making the taxpayers of Queensland pay for what they thought was a personal donation? I table the documents.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. Ministers go to all forms of events. The member for Bundamba perhaps should speak to her leader to her right, who has been a minister. The member for Bundamba is probably not as experienced as the—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Never as a ministerial expense—never.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The actual function cost money to attend. A lot of the time ministers get free event tickets. A lot of the time we do not take tickets; we use our ministerial budget. So at least a contribution is being made to these community groups that are doing a marvellous job right around Queensland. I might add that I have also signed a cheque—an additional cheque—to ChaplainWatch for something in the vicinity of \$40,000 to ensure that their services are continued for the drink safe precinct. I certainly think Lance, as the senior chaplain down there, and the other chaplains are very appreciative of a \$50 donation from anyone, let alone the \$40,000 in additional money the government gave them.

**Mrs MILLER:** So you are so miserable that you had to claim it back.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, is that another question?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes. I was just asking whether you are so miserable that you had to claim it back off the taxpayer.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** I am just asking the question.

**CHAIR:** It is not a question.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, it is.

**CHAIR:** You are restating the same question, which has been asked.

**Mrs MILLER:** I am just asking if he is miserable.

**Miss BARTON:** If I could take you back to the Coroner. I was wondering if you could outline for the benefit of the committee how recent measures undertaken to improve the efficiency of the Office of the State Coroner have been effective?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for Broadwater for her question. Can I start by saying, as I followed on in relation to the work of the Coroner's office, that I have just recently appointed a new State Coroner, Mr Terence Ryan, who worked for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General for many years. Magistrate Ryan has now started as State Coroner. Of course, he took over the role that Magistrate Michael Barnes was conducting.

I think the role of the Coroner in Queensland is in good shape. Members may not know that the role of the Coroner in early, early days was not in its current format; it was as a tax collector for the state. I am not sure if it is the equivalent to the Office of State Revenue that the Treasurer has now, but the State Coroner was set up to get back the taxes owed to the state. The coronial office has obviously expanded since then and we see them performing the great role that they do now.

As I said, we have Mr David O'Connell now as a Central Coroner. That was an appointment in August 2012. We have seen reportable deaths investigated up there now for the first time—from Proserpine to Gayndah, essentially. There is also the permanent establishment of the coronial registrar role to investigate less complex natural causes of death. That has allowed coroners to focus on more complex investigations and inquests and the backlog of cases that has grown in recent years. The member may be interested to know that prior to the appointment of the Central Coroner 70 per cent of the reportable deaths were reported to six 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 Courts. We have certainly processes in place, member. I think, as we look to the future, we will make sure the Coroner's office is sufficiently resourced and continues to do the great job that they are all doing at the moment.

**Miss BARTON:** Could you also provide the committee with an update on the important work that has been undertaken by the Office of the State Coroner, including how many matters it has dealt with in the past financial year?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. As at 31 May 2013, 4,387 deaths had been reported to coroners for investigation—up from 4,107 for the same period in the previous financial year. As at 31 May 2013, coroners finalised 4,569 investigations. This is 350 more than during the same period in 2011-12. I am very pleased to advise that for the 2012-13 period the backlog of cases was reduced, with coroners achieving a clearance rate of 103 per cent. Cases older than 24 months were reduced significantly—from 328 matters, or 14 per cent of the case load, to 273 matters, or 10.5 per cent, as at 31 May. Again, I acknowledge the professionalism and compassion that our coroners and support staff bring to the sensitive role they play at times.

**CHAIR:** Mr Attorney, may I return to the Legal Practitioner Interest Trust Accounts Fund. Will you outline what state government LPITAF funding has been provided to the Supreme Court library committee for this financial year?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** As you have indicated, the LPITAF funding—and many people would not understand what it actually is; it is the interest earned on lawyers' trust accounts—fluctuates from time to time. During the global financial crisis and the property downfall, of course, the interest earned on lawyers' trust accounts was severely impacted. That impacted the Legal Aid budget because not as much money was being paid into trust accounts. Therefore, no interest was being earned. Therefore, times were tough in terms of withholding or sustaining the LPITAF funding budget.

The Supreme Court library is a beneficiary of LPITAF funding, as are the Bar Association, the Law Society and the community legal centres. The Supreme Court library is the primary legal service provider for the state. It provides legal heritage as well. It serves the courts, the legal profession, researchers and students. For this reason, to support the work of the library the state government approved \$290,000 in funding for the Supreme Court of Queensland Library for 2013-14. In the past year, the Supreme Court of Queensland Library had received LPITAF funding—so it had received annual funding. It provides over \$33 million funding each year to organisations, as I said and which I have mentioned. So it is a very good library. Aladin, who is the librarian there, is due to retire this year. I wish him all the very best and wish the selection committee of the Supreme Court library committee, of which, of course, I am an ex officio member, all the best in deciding who Aladin's replacement will be.

**CHAIR:** And I hope Aladin's health is much improved as well.

**Mr CHOAT:** This is an issue that is quite relevant to my community. Could you outline the government's plans in relation to a potential increase in the amount of tenancy work undertaken by community legal centres as a result of the potential closure of TAAS from 1 January next year?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. The Commonwealth government has committed to funding the operation of the Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service of Queensland until December 2013. If the service is not funded from 1 January 2014, the Queensland government will monitor any impact on the number of tenancy legal services provided by community legal centres. Centres will be asked to collect statistics for a period of about six months. After that period, if there is a demonstrated need for additional funding to pick up legal services previously delivered by the Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service, funding requests will be considered. I might make the point to the member that there are community legal centres and other groups right around Queensland that currently do work on top of what TAAS was doing to provide that service and TAAS also receives funding out of the LPITAF funding pool.

**Mr WATTS:** Turning back to youth justice and boot camps, might I say that I am sure the councils on the Darling Downs would welcome the opportunity. Just with reference—

**CHAIR:** Member for Toowoomba North, just get in line!

**Mr WATTS:** With reference to question on notice No. 1, could you outline how the government will fulfil its commitment to have boot camps operating in Rockhampton, Townsville and the Sunshine Coast area by September this year?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We have conducted a tender process. We have organisations that have put in particular tenders. We are now going through the process with the review committee looking at those tenders. I have not received all the tenders, all the recommendations for the providers, but once we do our intention would be to announce all three providers in the next couple of weeks. Upon the announcement, we would make sure the providers got straight to it in August so that they are up and running by September this year, or through September. That is the position that we held when we announced the additional boot camps. That, of course, includes Cairns—the boot camp at Kuranda, which we closed down and terminated the contract for with the issues that we had up there. But the government is still committed to that. The Cairns community did not want us to walk away from that commitment. They wanted us to continue to do it. We changed the format of the tender documentation in terms of some of the requirements. So that will also include the three additional boot camps of Rockhampton, Hervey Bay, Sunshine Coast and Townsville but also the re-establishment of the Cairns boot camp.

**Miss BARTON:** In a similar vein, I just wanted to turn to the Gold Coast boot camp. Unlike my colleagues in Ipswich and Toowoomba I don't have to get in line. I have had the benefit of visiting the Gold Coast boot camp. Unfortunately it was a bit wet and muddy. I was wondering if you could update the committee on the results that have been achieved by the early intervention centre on the Gold Coast.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you, Mr Chair, and to the member, we are up to our third group of young people through the camp. The camp that is operating there now is a group of women, as I understand. I do hope the member took the opportunity to conduct some of the activities or participate in some of the activities.

**Miss BARTON:** I did, Mr Attorney.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** As the Premier and I did when they threw me 40 metres in the air.

**Miss BARTON:** I believe there is video footage of the flying fox.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** There is video footage. I was quite concerned, because when I was about 10 metres being flung into the air with another 20 or 30 metres to go it did occur to me that my life was in the hands of the individuals that I had essentially sent to the boot camp who were holding the rope at the other end.

**Miss BARTON:** A great sense of trust, Mr Attorney.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thankfully one of the supervisors was also holding the rope just in case. The boot camp, as the member says, the early intervention camp at the Gold Coast, is going well. We have had a couple of issues with young individuals, like we expected. We didn't expect five out of five to graduate in the first instant. It is a program that is developing and growing and we are all learning every day. These are difficult children. They are not in a boot camp because it is a reward or it is fun. It is a boot camp they have chosen because they want to change their life. They want to get their life back on track. The early intervention camp is particularly important because it deals with young kids who are at risk of ending up in the youth justice system. Whereas the sentence youth boot camp is those targeted who are already in the youth justice system, the early intervention camp is young people at school who might be referred by the police or teachers and it is about trying to sort their issues out at an early age. That ultimately will save the taxpayer because if we don't those young kids will likely end up in youth detention centres, which will cost the taxpayer \$250,000 a year, and then if they end up in an adult detention centre it is about \$100,000 a year.

**CHAIR:** Member for Ipswich West?

**Mr CHOAT:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Attorney, you will know me as being one who is not afraid to give a plug. I will say to you that in addition to the mayor of Ipswich, Councillor David Pahlke in Division 10 and I are very keen to discuss with you potential locations for boot camps and I must say I have a lot of community support both in terms of what the government is doing but bringing it back local. I will turn to the broader issue of youth justice. Could you comment on the purpose of and the work being undertaken in relation to the youth justice blueprint?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, I thank the member for the question. The youth justice blueprint was released by the government some time ago whereby we were asking Queenslanders for the first time to have a say on what they believe should be the right approach to dealing with the issues of youth justice, whether it be the detention centres, whether it be what happens in the detention centres, whether it be issues that we have obtained through the survey. So, part of the youth justice blueprint was a few things: one, we stopped the fun in the detention centres. The former Labor Party government used to send in bucking bulls, have diving and snorkelling classes, they used to bring in jumping castles for the kids at a particular youth detention centre in Townsville. We have abolished all of that because the Queensland community would not expect that to take place in a youth detention centre. And remember that under the current legislation detention is a last resort. These young people are in detention because they have committed either a series of crimes or they have committed quite serious crimes. So, that was the first phase: getting rid of all the fun out of the youth detention centres that were endorsed and encouraged by the former Labor government.

The second part was launching the youth justice strategy and that was the survey. I am pleased to advise that we have had over 4,000 responses to that youth justice survey, 70 per cent of which have been victims of crime, 70 per cent of which have been female. So, a large cohort of victims and by far a majority of the responders were female in the state. So we had over 4,000. What we will do now, and it is my intention, is to formulate and strengthen the policies in terms of a few

things. Naming and shaming had generally by far majority support from those respondents. We also looked at other issues: of 17 year olds being moved from a youth detention centre facility to an adult correctional facility—upon turning the age of 17, if they are in a youth detention centre, getting them out of the youth space. We are also looking at things in the youth justice survey, of course, such as our early intervention, our boot camps, which received great support in the survey. We are also looking at, as the Chief Justice has started the debate on at a state level with adult offenders, whether we should look at previous convictions, whether those convictions of young people should be able to be made public and, finally, looking at the issue of opening our children's courts so the media and the public can see what is happening in our Children's Court. Rather than young people coming out of our courts thumbing their nose and sticking their finger up at the law, they can actually take some form of responsibility and Queensland will be able to identify these particular individuals.

However, we have got to get the balance right. We have to make sure that young people who want to be given a chance to change their life and turn their life around are given that opportunity because that is the best thing that we can try to achieve. If we can turn a young person around from that life of crime they will not end up in the college of crime. It is better for the community, it saves the taxpayer and it is better for this individual. If they get a job and an education the world will be better off.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Attorney, if I could just take you back to QCAT. I know it was raised a little bit earlier on. Could you provide the committee with an update on the statutory review of the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2009.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you, Mr Chair, and I thank the member for the question. I am conducting a statutory review of QCAT. I have appointed new District Court Judge Horneman-Wren to the deputy president role of QCAT and he is doing a great job. President Alan Wilson finished his term, which I extended for 12 months. He finishes at the end of this year. This is an important review of QCAT in its fifth year of operation. We are currently finalising the responses to the review. There has been a great response from the community in terms of issues of legal representation—should greater legal representation be made available; should there be more pro bono services provided; should some of the jurisdiction, for instance, of solicitors' professional negligence or misconduct, be converted back to the Supreme Court. There are lots of issues that have come up in the review. We also, as part of this review, have the trial of the JP program which, going around the trial sites, the four that are operating at the moment, seems to be going quite well. The JPs are very much engaged in the process.

**Mr WATTS:** Just with reference to QCAT, Attorney, could you update us on the clearance rates over the last year?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you, Mr Chair, and I thank the member for the question. One of the issues with QCAT, and I have referred to it publicly on some occasions, is it really has to be a sort of lean, mean justice machine. It is the earliest opportunity that people may have, particularly the disadvantaged in our community, access to justice and be in some form of court or another. The government, as I said, is committed to ensuring that QCAT operates as efficiently as it was set up to as possible, and monitoring clearance rates is an essential part of that undertaking. QCAT continues to deliver on its goals in carrying out the dispute resolution services in a fair, just, accessible and quick way in the inexpensive manner in which it operates. With overall clearance rates for the 2012-13 period sitting at 112 per cent, that compares favourably against the previous year's clearance rate of about 98 per cent.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Attorney, in your last question you touched on the JPs. Could you give the committee a bit of an update on the recruitment, selection, training and the appointment process used for that JP QCAT pilot program.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you, Mr Chair, and I thank the member for the question. This is a very positive policy that has been embraced by JPs, some of our 93,000 JPs that we have right across Queensland. As part of this program we have five trial sites established where we were having two JPs sit in the quasi court or forming the jurisdiction for the court. They can hear matters under \$5,000 in minor civil disputes. One of the elements when two JPs sit at the bench is that one has to be legally qualified. It is no secret that we struggled at the start to get legally qualified JPs to come forward. However, in four of the five trial sites it hasn't been a problem. Townsville is still a problem. We are still looking through trying to get legally qualified JPs, but the other trial sites have been operating for over a month or six to eight weeks. I have attended three or four justices of the peace forums around the state. I have seen probably in the last month, I would estimate, upwards of 500 to 600 JPs and



the feedback that I am getting from JPs, and some of the JPs who have been to these forums are actually participating in the trial, is that they are very much enjoying it. The president of QCAT, Justice Alan Wilson, is very much supportive of the program and it seems to be travelling quite smoothly. Queenslanders very much enjoy it because it is commonsense. They are getting commonsense solutions. It is two JPs, upstanding members of the community, deciding matters under \$5,000.

**CHAIR:** Leader of the Opposition, member for Inala?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you very much, Chair. Attorney-General, I refer to page 3 of the SDS. I want to explore the whole boot camp issue in a little bit more detail. Will the Attorney give an explanation for the serious failings of the Cairns boot camp where I understand a homeowner and staff were threatened with weapons and numerous other serious offences were committed?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you, Mr Chair, and I thank the member for the question. These matters I did deal with in parliament in some detail through a ministerial statement. What essentially happened is when we offered the opportunity for two boot camps operating in Queensland, we chose the Cairns area, because it had a high crime rate compared to other jurisdictions, for the sentence youth boot camp. We then went through an independent procurement process. Recommended to me by the department, of course, was Safe Pathways. Safe Pathways had certain obligations and duties to adhere to. The residential component of the boot camp was set up in Kuranda and it fundamentally went wrong. I have said that on many, many occasions. I took direct responsibility for it. I said to the community members that I phoned in the Kuranda area, 'What would you like us to do with it?' They said close the residential component down but certainly they want the boot camp operating somewhere in Cairns, preferably out of town. The director-general, through his powers and under the contract, because we obviously had a contract with Safe Pathways, issued a notice to Safe Pathways, giving them seven or eight days to explain how they allowed two individuals of the boot camp to escape from the residential component, bearing in mind throughout the day they were in other areas of Cairns. The director-general issued that notice. The response wasn't satisfactory and the director-general then terminated the contract.

We are committed to the boot camp process though. That is why we re-entered the market and re-issued tender documentation. That tender documentation process is finished and we are in the process of working out where we go to from now with the boot camp in Cairns.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Let us be clear: under your direction a boot camp was set up in Cairns. Two people were sent to that boot camp and the two people escaped. That is not a good start to the boot camp program, is it, Attorney?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** As I said, I think the opposition leader is actually just copying my ministerial statement because I probably used words to that exact effect. It was a failure.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It is appalling.

**CHAIR:** Allow the Attorney to answer the question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** What the opposition leader doesn't know is that there was another young boy sentenced to the boot camp who had been at the boot camp. This is not yet public knowledge, Mr Chairman. He was sentenced to the boot camp. Whilst in the process of participating in the boot camp his brother, who was also on youth justice orders, committed suicide. He then was relieved from the boot camp to attend the family and the funeral of his young brother. The opposition leader can explain and say what I have, in fact, said in parliament about the failure of this residential component of the boot camp. The government has learnt its lesson from that proponent of the boot camp and it will not happen again.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I want to move on now to the fact that the government is planning to expand these boot camps to Townsville, Rockhampton, the Fraser Coast and the Sunshine Coast. The Attorney has stated here at estimates that he expects they will be up and running by September. What do you say to the people of Queensland? Are these boot camps going to be exactly the same as what happened in Cairns? What have you put in place to ensure they will run effectively so that Queenslanders will have confidence in your process?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** By gauging the response from members of parliament and the community who are calling out for these boot camps, I would satisfactorily say that Queenslanders have absolute confidence in the government's direction on boot camps. If they did not, I would not have the requests that I do from people wanting boot camps. As you have indicated, Mr Chair, your mayor wants one.

Mayor Pam Parker wants one. I was in the Redlands recently and the members down there want one. I was at Redcliffe recently with the member for Murrumba. I attended the youth groups already operating in Redcliffe. They want a boot camp and they want to run the boot camp. So I think Queenslanders actually have confidence in the process, because it seems in every electorate I go to they are calling for more government funding in terms of these boot camps operating. From the amount of responses I get from people operating boot camps—non-profit sector groups operating boot camps currently in Queensland contacting me wishing for government assistance to make their boot camps part of the broader government strategy for youth justice—I have complete confidence that the Queensland community want these boot camps. We have put processes in place.

At the end of the day, there is a contract, like anything. Like any government procurement process, there is a contract. If the provider, whoever that may be—and it would not matter if it were a boot camp tender, a tender to build a building or a tender to deliver any other government service—fails in their duties to satisfy the elements of the contract then there will be actions taken against the provider, just as we did with the provider in Cairns.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** My next question is to the director-general of the department. Good morning. Director-General, can you please outline to the committee the tender process for these remaining boot camps?

**Mr Sosso:** As you are aware, there are three currently being processed: the sentenced boot camp in Townsville and the residential ones in Rockhampton and on the Fraser Coast. The deputy director-general of youth services, together with other representatives of the Queensland government—the Department of Community Services, Queensland Police Service and the like—is on the selection panel for those particular boot camp tenders. There is a probity process in place to ensure the process is managed appropriately.

At the end of the day, under the community services legislation, the minister is the person who has to approve the successful tender. With respect to the Kuranda incident, following the Kuranda incident I issued a show-cause notice to Safe Pathways. They gave me a response that I was not satisfied with, so I terminated the contract. Following from that, we determined that there would be no more boot camps located in residential areas or near residential areas. It is very important in the future that the boot camp be provided in a safe environment for the juveniles concerned but, more importantly, in a safe environment for the community, because if there is not safety for the community then there is no support for the boot camp and the whole process is a nullity. So from this point onwards, the boot camps will be located in areas where they are not near urban conurbations. That is No. 1.

No. 2: with respect to the probity process, I have ensured that the selection committees are independent of government—that is, of executive government in the sense of ministerial intervention—and that there is probity in place. At the end of the day, I have to be satisfied, and the government has to be satisfied on behalf of the people of Queensland, that what we do ensures that the safety of Queenslanders is paramount. Before the recommendations go to the minister and are not before the minister, I will be personally taking an interest to ensure that the persons who have been nominated by the selection panel meet one fundamental criterion—that is, that they have experience in the field, that the areas they are proposing are appropriate for the people of Queensland and that an incident like the one in Kuranda will not happen again. It is a balancing act of ensuring proper process, but at the end of the day we will ensure that what we choose is a boot camp that will operate both for the interests of the juveniles concerned and with the safety of Queenslanders as paramount.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Director-General, I have a follow-up question: are you confident that the time line that was announced by the Attorney of September will be met, because we are now in July?

**Mr Sosso:** We would hope so. I am not going to say anything at this stage because I have not had a chance to peruse the documentation yet. It is obviously in the interests of everyone that it be done as quickly as possible. I will be working as quickly as I can. This is a bit different. We are learning as we are going along. I would like to say that the textbook was there and we are simply ticking off as we go along, but we are learning from our mistakes as we are going in this one. We will use our best endeavours to move quickly, but we will ensure it is done in such a way that the interests of the public are paramount.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Finally, Director-General, will you rule out utilising an existing school site for a boot camp? There is some concern in Townsville that one of the schools which the government is currently considering in terms of whether it should remain open is being flagged as a potential boot camp site.

**Mr Sosso:** The decision on the location of boot camps is a combination of two things. One is whether it meets the requirements of the tender and the other is the appropriateness having regard to a range of factors. One is the safety for the juveniles—workplace health and safety and so on and so forth. Fundamentally, as I said before, if the issue is whether a school facility in an urban area will be used as a boot camp then the answer is absolutely no.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** This school site is located adjacent to a commercial precinct. Will you rule out that existing school site being utilised as a boot camp? There is a lot of concern in the Townsville region.

**Mr Sosso:** The decision is for the minister, not for me. If there is a school site located in an urban area, whether it is near a commercial premises or not, it will not be the subject of a boot camp because it would not meet the terms of the tender.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Mr Chairman, I have a follow-on question for the director-general. I thank you for the frankness in your answer. Perhaps I should have put my earlier question about this issue to you and not to the minister, because now I know that the boot camp in the Fraser Coast/Sunshine Coast area will not be in a residential area and will not be near a residential area. Director-General, how much money is proposed to be allocated to the proposed boot camp for the Fraser Coast/Sunshine Coast area, for the 12 months?

**Mr Sosso:** If the member would bear with me for one second, I will get the figures.

**CHAIR:** We might adopt the same procedure as last time. Do you want to follow up with another question, member for Nicklin?

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Yes. This will be to the Attorney-General. Attorney-General, a number of sales of state government land have been mooted by the Minister for Education. I ask: is there any land or real estate under your ministerial responsibility that is currently subject to being sold or disposed of?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I could not answer that at this juncture. If there are surface lands that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General does not require, it would be in the interests of the taxpayer to get rid of the land. For education, if the member has a question on that, he should direct that to the appropriate committee.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I have a follow-on question. The Premier has made a number of statements about how important it is that this government focuses on buying local where possible. I ask: what actions have you taken as minister to implement this policy and buy local, be it now a standard component in contracts that you may be involved with? What action have you taken?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I can recall one example, if the member would be interested. I recently wrote to every justice of the peace in Queensland. We had a quote from a Victorian company that was fundamentally cheaper than the Queensland company—by a few thousand dollars—but in the interests of the Queensland company I chose the Queensland company. We went back to the Queensland company to try to barter a better deal and they took it down a little bit, but not as much as we would have liked. We did choose the Queensland company based on that buying locally campaign.

I make the point, though, that Queensland companies and Queensland businesses have to be competitive. We have scarce resources: the taxpayer funds. We have limited taxpayer funds available to government in terms of revenue. If there is an obvious supply issue in Queensland, then we would obviously look at other areas outside of Queensland. That would also be the case if the taxpayer gets a better bang for their dollar in another jurisdiction. I think the taxpayer would fully expect us to do that.

**CHAIR:** Mr Attorney, is the director-general able to return to that question with an answer or does he want a few more minutes?

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I am happy for it to be—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** While the director-general is doing it, my understanding is—and the director-general can correct me—that it was \$3.1 million for the three boot camps and the documentation did not specify an amount. The providers could come up with an amount and then it would be distributed amongst the three boot camps, as I understand it.

**Mr Sosso:** I am still getting the figures.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Is that an equal division?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** My understanding would be not necessarily, because it depends. Some providers may say, 'We have a facility,' or, 'We have to buy a facility.' Some say, 'We have to lease a facility.' It may be, depending on the circumstances, and the review panel would have looked at all of those details.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Director-General, do you have anything further?

**Mr Sosso:** I am still waiting to see if I can get the figure for you, Mr Wellington. I was going to say that, obviously, the sentenced boot camp would be more expensive to run than the presentence boot camp because of the nature of the people involved. There would be an extra cost component for that one.

**CHAIR:** Can we say that that question has been answered?

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Yes.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Can I please call the Acting Electoral Commissioner?

**CHAIR:** Through the Attorney, yes.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Good morning. I refer to the changes that the government is flagging in relation to voter ID. I just wanted to know how many people have been charged with voter fraud from the last state and local government elections?

**Mr van der Merwe:** We do a check on the rolls. For multiple voters, we have not quite completed that yet. It is a work in progress. The numbers are relatively low.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Relatively low?

**Mr van der Merwe:** Yes, for multiple voters.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** In relation to the government now looking at requiring people to present ID, a lot of concerns have been raised with me by people that that is going to be very onerous on them. A lot of people would go to a polling booth on the way to work or would walk up from their home. Elderly people may not have their ID with them. Are you concerned about any of those issues?

**Mr van der Merwe:** I am not in a position to comment on the proposed government policy. I do not think it is clear as to what ID is going to be required at this stage. The Attorney may wish to comment on that.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am happy for the Attorney-General to provide a response.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We have finished our electoral reform discussion paper. We have released the responses to it. It is an interesting question coming from the opposition, because their government, when they were in government, actually introduced—the Electoral Commission, you will recall, wrote to everyone—a little ID card that they suggested you should bring with you to the polling booth.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** And some people did.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I suspect that if the former government were re-elected it would ultimately be mandated in the future. It was to test the waters. I recall that in the year it was instituted the card was very small and people struggled to read it. Then they increased the print on the card. I can recall, as a voter, that there was fairly large print that said, 'Bring this with you on polling day to confirm your identity'. I have said that ID will be required to be provided. It will not be photo ID. I am sure that every enrolled voter in Queensland has a Medicare card, a driver's licence, an EFTPOS card, a credit card—something with a name on it that they can show to the Electoral Commission worker or volunteer that this is who they are saying they are. It will not be required to be photo ID, because I do acknowledge the fact that a lot of senior people do not have a driver's licence and anyone else who does not have a driver's licence may not have photo identification. This is a little rich coming from the opposition, which instituted voter ID and the practice of bringing a card with you on polling day.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** These are actually your proposals, Attorney, with all due respect. We have just had the Acting Electoral Commissioner essentially say that he does not see it as a huge issue—that is, there have not been a large number of people who have been caught in relation to voter ID fraud.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** And let us hope that continues to be the case. I would say that the risk will be less with identification being provided at a polling booth on polling day.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** If people present to a polling booth and they have forgotten their ID will there be any other provisions that mean that they will be entitled to a vote? I am very concerned that people are going to turn up to polling booths with no ID. They could be coming from their homes on their way to work. They could be elderly or have a disability. This could in fact mean a large number of people will not have their vote counted.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We will be instituting an education campaign to ensure people bring a form of ID to a polling booth. If they do not they will not be able to vote.

**CHAIR:** I might redirect the questioning to workplace health and safety. Can you update this committee on how recent changes to the definition of 'a worker' under the workers compensation legislation provides greater clarity for industry and workers in Queensland?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank you for the question. This was an issue raised with me on numerous occasions by the likes of the Masters Builders Association and HIA. We have the fundamental problem in Queensland that we have numerous definitions of 'a worker'. The workplace health and safety legislation has a definition of worker. The WorkCover legislation has a definition. For taxation purposes we have a different definition of worker. We have Commonwealth legislation with definitions of worker. What we are doing here is basically making the definition of worker under the WorkCover legislation only the same as the definition the tax office applies. It is easier for both the employer and employee to determine whether they are workers.

One of the complaints I was getting across the state from those in the construction industry and small and medium enterprises is that WorkCover conducted random audits on their work sites and said that certain people are actually workers under the definition of the WorkCover legislation and they would say, 'But hang on, they drive their own ute, they have trade equipment, they have their air compressors, nail guns, hammers, tools of trade and sometimes have their own insurance. How can they be a worker?' But they are under the WorkCover legislation. By changing the definition of worker in the WorkCover legislation to the definition used by the tax office it gets rid of a lot of the confusion.

There is one business I know of in my own electorate where the owner had a random audit conducted of his business. He was stuck in this situation just like others in other areas across Queensland. He was hit with a \$300,000 bill from WorkCover. Under the legislation it is actually a 100 per cent penalty. He got a \$300,000 penalty. That resulted in a \$600,000 bill. What small business can have that sort of money up their sleeve to pay government taxes or to use for other purposes? No-one would. No-one would expect them to have it.

That is why it is important that we follow the advice of the Master Builders Association and HIA. At some stage the government will have to deal with the broader issue of the consolidation of the definition of worker because we still have so many definitions of worker. To add to the mix the courts have also described what a worker is.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Broadwater.

**Miss BARTON:** Mr Attorney, can you please provide an update on the proactive measures the department is undertaking to encourage industry best practice and safer workplaces in Queensland, including ways to reduce workers compensation premiums?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. I think our position in government is very much that industry really needs to lead the way with this. I think industry and the private sector do want to lead the way. No-one wants injuries in their workplaces not only for the safety and obviously the illness or injury of the worker but also for the loss of productivity of that worker for some period of time.

We are very much encouraging the Zero Harm at Work leadership forums and the other workplace health and safety forums. Mr Mal Meninga is our safety ambassador. We also have safety awards every year. For those on the committee who may not know, Mal Meninga's father was involved in a workplace injury and that is why his passion lies in the prevention of workplace injuries. That is why we have him as our workplace safety ambassador. He is doing a fantastic job. He is going to a lot of electorates across Queensland and speaking at breakfasts about workplace health and safety. Of course we also have our awards.

We want businesses to come up with practical solutions to deal with a lot of the problems. We want workers to be engaged in that process as well. More so than has ever been done before, we are strengthening the relationship with industries right across-the-board. We also have collaboration between, for instance, the meat manufacturing industry and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. That has resulted in safety workshops as well. I recently attended the Australian Country Choice abattoir and talked to the folks out there about workplace health and safety.

We are very much committed to this, but we are very much wanting industry to really take a lead role and invest in it and invest in their workers, which, I am pleased to say, they are doing. It can always be better, but this is a start.

**Miss BARTON:** I have a follow-up question. In relation to the IPaM program, can you please provide specific examples to the committee of improvements in safety management in Queensland workplaces?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you. The IPaM program you refer to is the Injury Prevention and Management program. There are approximately 1,000 insurance policy holders within Queensland's workers compensation scheme whose premium rates are currently capped at twice the relevant industry rate due to their poor claims experience. These employers account for less than two per cent of the scheme participants, but represent almost 12 per cent of the claims lodged.

The 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 safety and health of workers and adversely affects the productivity and profitability of the employers. The Injury Prevention and Management program, the IPaM program you refer to, is a joint initiative between Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and WorkCover Queensland which helps employers improve their injury prevention and management systems.

I will give you some positive examples of the IPaM program. A glass manufacturer has slashed its injury rates by more than 50 per cent across all three branches of the company. In recent years the company experienced a large number of workers compensation, statutory and common law claims, a high turnover, staff morale made it difficult to address safety issues across its branches and a significant spike in injuries to new workers had been noted. The company implemented the new safety program that embeds safety as a core business priority. The program focuses on management, commitment and support, empowering staff at all levels to engage in a range of activities to improve workplace health and safety.

There are things that they include in their workplace management plans. This includes informing supervisors and managers about legal responsibilities, providing supervisors and managers with practical tools and templates that they may never have had before, developing consistent safety initiatives, incident investigation processes and checklists and sourcing a medical centre.

Another example I can give the member is of a family-run block-laying business. It is aiming to achieve a 30 per cent reduction in claim costs this year. They had relied more broadly in recent years on larger organisations with whom they contracted to take the load on this issue. A below average return to work history and their workers compensation record prompted a review of their own safety systems. Over the past year the company implemented some simple but effective changes to the way they manage the workload. They include the daily checking and recording of safety issues by the site foreman, checking the competency of all workers for the operation of high-risk plant and, finally, updating incident reporting in line with the new work health and safety legislation. All in all, industry is really having to and is leading the charge in this. We encourage and support that.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Ipswich West.

**Mr CHOAT:** Following on with the theme of efficiency whilst maintaining safety, which is so important, could you advise of initiatives being undertaken to enhance the capability for online renewal of high-risk work licences and particularly how these reforms benefit Queenslanders living and working in rural and regional areas?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. Keeping Queenslanders safe at work is of vital importance to all workers and employers and their families, but presents a particular challenge to employees working in high-risk environments. High-risk licences are issued to people working with cranes, hoists, forklifts, rigging and dogging, scaffolding or high-pressure equipment. The purpose of the high-risk work licensing system is to ensure a high standard of safety for those individuals performing this work. In addition, this assists people with duties under health and safety laws to be satisfied that licence holders are competent to perform high-risk work and to ensure the health and safety of workers and members of the public near the workplace. The licensing system is currently being developed and will be released in early September this year ready for the first renewals due in October 2013.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for the Bulimba.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Could you update the committee on the rollout of the electrical equipment safety system, including the Queensland government's role in this revolutionary new system, and, of course, outline how it is reducing red tape for industry by streamlining the approval process?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. The electrical equipment safety system is a Queensland-led national web based and publicly accessible register of domestic electrical equipment and deals with the registration of responsible suppliers of equipment onto the Australian and Queensland market. Queensland developed model investigation that could be adopted in its entirety or used by other jurisdictions to amend their own legislation. We have also coordinated uniform rules to be applied to the supply of domestic electrical equipment. The program includes a dynamic risk assessment approach to classifying electrical equipment risk, enabling regulatory intervention when needed. We are really at the forefront on this. The system commenced on 1 March 2013 and in Tasmania on 1 May 2013. Other states, except for New South Wales, are moving through their legislative processes already.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Toowoomba North.

**Mr WATTS:** I turn you to the Office of Fair Trading. Could you update the committee on compliance activities undertaken by the Office of Fair Trading in 2012-13, particularly in relation to door-to-door energy retail salespeople and travelling con men?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. The Office of Fair Trading's compliance work during 2012-13 included, for the member's benefit, receiving over 13,000 complaints, finalising 2,000 investigations, initiating 1,306 enforcement actions and monitoring over 9,400 individuals and corporations for compliance. There is a national campaign going on at the moment in terms of travelling con men. We have seen it in Bundaberg recently with con men offering to do bitumen and concreting work. That is unfortunately going on around the state.

We always say to people that when someone comes to their door do not sign a contract for work to be performed at a later date and certainly do not give any credit card or identifying particulars. We really have to have a national agenda because these con men are unfortunately travelling over borders and across jurisdictions. One jurisdiction can deal with it, for instance the fair trading office, but they end up in another jurisdiction. If we are not collaborating and working with our brothers and sisters in departments elsewhere we will have issues. We have to ensure that we continually talking to other officers—and we certainly do that—to make sure that we have the processes right. There are organisations registered in other jurisdictions that may be found to have breached particular legislation and we get told about them.

My message to Queenslanders, particularly the more vulnerable in our community, those with disabilities or the elderly, is that if you have these travelling roadshow con men come to your door, you will not know they are a con man until you have been conned—that is, until you have paid the money and are waiting for the work to be done and it never happens. Unfortunately, even after the Australians Day natural disasters we had in the Bundaberg region we had con men travel to Bundaberg offering to repair homes and fix driveways and footpaths. Money was paid upfront. They usually utilise the circumstances. As someone whose grandparents were in the epicentre of North Bundaberg and lost the downstairs area in their house and lost all their possessions, I can understand how people like my grandparents could be conned if someone comes to door in that type of environment where they are just wanting everything to be fixed and done.

**Mr WATTS:** You mentioned the elderly and disabled. I have another area that I am interested in. What initiatives have been undertaken by the Office of Fair Trading in the past year to engage young people in consumer protection issues?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We have a few programs. We have one called Get Out There, in recognition of the specific needs of young people. The Office of Fair Trading hosts the Get Out There website. The animated site hosts a wealth of information young consumers need as they transition from school years to tertiary education or full- or part-time work. Young people can visit the website and learn more about keeping their money under control, buying a car, their rights as consumers, buying a house, renting, finding the right job.

We also have the Buy Smart Competition, which is currently underway, which I launched at the Chancellor State College. That competition is designed to encourage young people to be smarter consumers, know their rights and responsibilities and increase their understanding of trading issues. So that is a great concept. A lot of the time now young people unfortunately get conned with smart phones and iPhones. Ninety-nine per cent of young people in year 7 now have some form of smart phone. So the issue is trying to keep pace with the technology we have. Attorneys-General in all jurisdictions—we meet a couple of times a year—are battling the issue of these sorts of protections for the consumer when we live in a world where technology is increasingly moving more rapidly than law and we cannot keep pace with it. We have to try to keep ahead of it.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Can the Attorney-General update the committee a little further on the Office of Fair Trading in terms of the performance of the product safety team and the role of the unit over the next 12 months?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. The legislative provisions to ensure the safety of consumer goods and products fall within the Australian Consumer Law, which is administered jointly by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the state and territory fair trading agencies in Queensland. The OFT undertakes its product safety role by educating consumers and traders, monitoring the marketplace and enforcing product safety laws and liaising with the ACCC in relation to influencing the national product safety agenda. In 2012-13 the Office of Fair Trading conducted 771 product safety compliance audits state-wide; issued 10 civil penalty notices, totalling about \$104,000, for breaches of safety and information standards; issued six debt recovery orders, totalling \$3,000; issued 43 warnings for minor breaches; issued two enforceable undertakings; and finalised four court matters against two product importers.

Each year around the time of Ekka we also run a campaign with show bags. We look through show bags to make sure the products in all of the show bags on sale at different shows around Queensland are safe for kids. We had a demonstration at Parliament House some time ago, just before Christmas I believe, of plastic pump-action shotguns and helicopters and all sorts of things that I was firing out the front which we had recalled from sale because they presented a particular danger. Only in the last few weeks we had the tragic loss of a little Sunshine Coast child from a lithium battery. That is how serious we have to take these issues of product safety. The product might be safe but then if they can get into the battery compartment and the battery falls out and they swallow it we can end up with the devastating consequences we had a few weeks back.

**CHAIR:** Mr Attorney, can you provide an update on the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages' e-government initiatives, including the recent launch of the new family history portal?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, I thank you for the question. The government are very interested in the digitisation of birth, death and marriage records. We want to try as best we can to have information available online rather than people sending faxes or letters for particular information. In 2013, in this modern world, the public would expect nothing less from a government than to have products and services available online. It is far easier. A lot of people do business now online, so government should keep pace with that. I think there is a tremendous opportunity with Births, Deaths and Marriages to ensure they are at the forefront of that. So one of the things we are continuing to roll out is the digitisation of birth, death and marriage records going back to the 1800s.

The first initiative, finalised in March, gives private hospitals, for instance, the ability to submit birth notifications online. A similar service has been used for some time for public hospitals but we have now rolled that out to the private hospitals. Submitting birth notifications online benefits both hospitals and Births, Deaths and Marriages by automating the process, reducing the chance of manual errors, and improves reporting on statistics.

The second initiative which I had the pleasure of announcing last month was the delivery of an enhanced online family history service. This service allows family historians to search, order and pay for historical certificates and register images online 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The service was made easier, faster and cheaper for people to access the growing treasure trove of digitised content held at the registry. Not only does the enhanced family history search take full advantage of the ongoing BDM digitisation project; it almost halves the cost of researching family history in Queensland. Previously, for the committee's benefit, it was about \$39 to purchase a hard-copy historical certificate. That is now reduced to \$28, or you can download a scan of the original register page for \$20. So we are nearly cutting in half what it cost to get that historical data.

We have had very positive feedback particularly from the historical societies and historians that look for family history records. When we announced the initiative, we looked at the original birth certificate of the author of *Mary Poppins*, who was born in Maryborough, of course, in the late 1800s. So we looked at her original birth certificate and we had a copy of her book there. The public can now access a copy of that extract for as little as \$25 for historical purposes.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Broadwater.

**Miss BARTON:** Mr Attorney, are you able to provide an update to the committee on the performance of the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in terms of the time taken for Queenslanders to register a life event and how this has improved?



**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. This year alone Births, Deaths and Marriages have registered over 125,000 Queensland life events, with the average turnaround time of 4.3 days—a 25 per cent improvement on processing times from last year. So in one year of this government we have had a 25 per cent increase in the turnaround time for those particular provisions.

Queenslanders rely on the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages for prompt information and accessibility. That is why a lot of our online initiatives help. Last financial year 280,000 births, deaths and marriage certificates were requested from the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and delivered within an average of 5.5 days. These time frames currently represent some of the best in the country, I am pleased to say, and are even more impressive when you consider that only four years ago it could have taken up to six weeks to register an event or receive a Queensland certificate. We are now turning it around—and the great staff in Births, Deaths and Marriages are turning it around—within an average of 5.5 days, down in the last four years from over six weeks. So we are continuing to demonstrate the online capacity, and I do thank all the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages staff for their continued role and positivity in that regard.

**CHAIR:** I call the Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I just wanted to explore a couple more budget related questions, please, Attorney. I refer to page 49 of the SDS. Why was almost \$1 million in equity withdrawn from the CMC in 2012-13? Could that money have been used to provide additional resourcing to the CMC?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you for the question. The DG and the finance officers probably can give a better response in terms of the actual figures, but I will just make a general remark. The CMC, with over 300 full-time staff, has a budget of over \$50 million. We have heard for a year now from the opposition and from the Independent member for Nicklin issues of resourcing the CMC.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Legitimate concerns that Queenslanders also share.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We have heard the acting chair of the CMC say today that they are sufficiently resourced to do what they are doing. The government have said on many, many occasions that we will ensure there is a strong independent watchdog, and all of this will be reviewed in the light of the government's consideration of and our responses to the recommendations of the Callinan-Aroney review. The CMC, with their existing budget, are doing what they need to do as Queenslanders would expect. I have raised issues in the past why the CMC spent \$60,000 surveying their staff and spent \$200,000 on consultants. We should be questioning why previous administrations in the CMC were spending money on those things—what they were spending that money on and why they were spending that particular money. Director-General?

**Mrs MILLER:** And you claimed back \$50!

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, your Leader of the Opposition is asking the question. The question is only partially completed. Please allow the director-general to finish the question.

**Mr Sosso:** Just on a point of clarification to the Leader of the Opposition, is that the figure on page 49—\$1,351,000 down to \$980,000?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No. It is the 'equity injection/(withdrawal)' entry. The note seems to indicate that it has gone back to Treasury. I just want that confirmed.

**Mr Sosso:** The answer is yes, and that was because the CMC had over a number of years surplus cash reserves and so that cash reserve was returned to Treasury.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** My next question is—and I refer to page 64 of the SDS: why was \$3.5 million in equity withdrawn from the Office of the Information Commissioner in 2012-13? What does it say about the commitment to open government when you are withdrawing money from the Office of the Information Commissioner?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, if I can—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No. The question is to the director-general, sorry.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, the opposition leader did not direct her question to anyone, so I am as Attorney taking the call on that.

**CHAIR:** Mr Attorney.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No. That is not correct, Chair. I am sorry.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Well you did not direct your question to anyone.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No. My question is to the director-general.

**CHAIR:** Mr Attorney, she is entitled to ask the director-general directly.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you. Thank you, Director-General.

**Mr Sosso:** Leader of the Opposition, could you just clarify your question now that I have the page open?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you. It is again with the Office of the Information Commissioner—\$3.5 million in equity. It says 'equity injection/(withdrawal)' at the bottom of the page.

**Mr Sosso:** Yes. To the best of my knowledge, the same answer applies to that one. It was an excess of cash balance returned to Treasury. But during the break I will confirm if that is not the case.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is fine. Thank you, Director-General.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I have two questions to the Acting Electoral Commissioner, if he would like to return, please. I take the Acting Electoral Commissioner to page 69 of the Service Delivery Statement where it talks about how the commissioner has been 'working with political parties and candidates to ensure compliance with financial disclosure laws', and I ask: have there been any prosecutions as a result of noncompliance with the financial disclosure laws as a result of the most recent state election and are there any prosecutions currently underway?

**Mr van der Merwe:** There are no prosecutions to date. We are currently investigating one matter. That is with the CMC and I will not be able to comment on that.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Thank you. I have a follow-up question. On that same page it states—

The Commission's effective delivery of electoral services and the provision of a free, honest and fair electoral system ensure that all Queenslanders have the opportunity to participate equitably in the democratic life of the State.

In relation to the proposal to require identification that the Attorney-General has referred to, can you give a commitment that there will not be any costs for any people or any person who may not be able to produce a driver's licence or identification with their photo on it, that they do not have to spend money to get some identification that is going to meet a new standard?

**Mr van der Merwe:** It is early days in terms of the proposal of requiring identification. The Electoral Commission will work with the Attorney and whoever else in terms of ensuring that nobody is not able to cast a vote. For example, if they are not able to produce the required identification on the day, there is nothing stopping us giving them a declaration vote and following up at a later stage. This proposal is all very new to us. It is only a couple of weeks old. We have not had an opportunity as yet to actually go through the administrative details and have a discussion with the Attorney. But I am pretty confident that will take place before anything is put into practice.

**CHAIR:** The committee will now break for morning tea. The hearing will resume at 11.45 am with the continued consideration of the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice.

#### **Proceedings suspended from 11.13 am to 11.45 am**

**CHAIR:** The estimates hearing of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee is now resumed. We will continue with the consideration of the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. Member for Nicklin, could you start off with the first question?

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. I have one question for the Ombudsman if he would like to come forward. Earlier this morning we heard from the Attorney-General and other parties about the Callinan-Aroney report and the impacts on the Crime and Misconduct Commission. My question to the Ombudsman is: do you have a view on the possible impacts of the proposed changes to the Crime and Misconduct Commission in light of the Callinan-Aroney recommendations to the Attorney-General?

**Mr Clarke:** I did in fact make submissions to the Attorney in regard to the report which reviewed the CMC. The Attorney acknowledged those submissions in a letter to me and asked me for further submissions on matters I had not yet commented on, and I further made submissions to the Attorney. At the moment, based on the Attorney's response to me and based upon the announcements that have been made both in the parliament and in the media, most of those things which I did have concern about are under consideration by the implementation panel is my understanding.

As a courtesy to the acting chair of the CMC, I met him recently. As part of that courtesy meeting we did discuss some aspects of the implementation of the recommendations in that review report. Subsequently I have written to the chair of the implementation panel reiterating my views—my submissions—in regard to those recommendations, particularly the recommendations that impact upon my office, and that is recommendations 4 and 10. But at the moment I am awaiting the outcome of the panel's work and have received opportunities to discuss my concerns with the panel through one member of the panel at this stage, but I have not had a response back to my latest letter.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. I have no further questions for our Ombudsman.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** And neither do I, Chair.

**CHAIR:** On that basis, you can leave if you wish.

**Mr Clarke:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Attorney, are you comfortable with that?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Yes. I do not think everyone behind you is comfortable that they have to stay.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Can I request to the front table the acting chair of the CMC and the acting chair of the Electoral Commission? I refer to page 4 of the SDS; namely, 'responding to the review of the Electoral Act'. My first question is to the acting chair of the Electoral Commission. I want to explore some of the day-to-day workings of the political donation declaration process. My question is: currently if an individual or an organisation were to donate \$12,000 to a party or a candidate, would that \$12,000 donation be declared as part of the six-month returns?

**Mr van der Merwe:** Yes, it would.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Under the changes currently proposed by the Attorney-General, would that \$12,000 donation be required to be declared at all?

**Mr van der Merwe:** To be honest, at the commission we are still trying to get our heads around what is being proposed in the policy. So I do not have an answer for you now.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** But if the cap is made higher then essentially donations under the cap would not have to be declared; correct?

**CHAIR:** Technically, that is a hypothetical. I do not know that he is required to answer that.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am happy to ask the Attorney-General.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. The response that I have given has been that it is not a detailed response to the green paper. It essentially lines up with the federal donation disclosure laws with the added bonus of a continuous disclosure regime of monthly disclosures.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes, but under your proposed changes would donations under \$12,000 be required to be declared to the Electoral Commission?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** As I said, it lines up with the federal legislation.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes or no?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It lines up with the federal legislation.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am asking you a question, Attorney: yes or no?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I have answered it. It lines up with the federal legislation.

**CHAIR:** We will move on. What is the next question?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Chair, I am actually very concerned about this. I would like to table a chart of donations for a six-month period to the end of 2012 which outlines that roughly 95 per cent of donations were below \$12,400. I seek leave to table the list of LNP donations for the second half of 2012.

**CHAIR:** Just the LNP?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No, I am going to get to the ALP as well. And the ALP donations as well.

**CHAIR:** I think you require leave.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I do. I seek leave to table those documents.

**CHAIR:** Committee members, is leave granted?

**Mrs MILLER:** Aye.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Aye.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you. I would like to point out—

**CHAIR:** I have not quite clarified that. Leave is granted.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Chair. From the list of LNP donations, 337 out of 352 donations—that is, 95 per cent—are under \$12,400 and they are declared. Under the new rules it now possibly means that only 15 would be declared. To make it very clear, it is a very similar situation with the ALP.

**CHAIR:** When you say 15, is that 15 or 15 per cent?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Fifteen, not 352, would be declared. From the list of 161 donations to the ALP, 155 are under \$12,400 so 96 per cent. That would mean only six donations, not 161, would be declared under the Attorney-General's new laws. Attorney, you promised an open and transparent government. How is this being open and transparent when so many donations will now not be disclosed?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. Following on from the federal jurisdiction, which has the same legislation and which does not seem to be presenting any difficulties, corruption issues or perceived corruption issues at a federal level, we believe the balance is right. It is \$12,400, as I put in the response to the discussion paper, but for the first time in the history of most jurisdictions in this country anything over \$12,000 will be disclosed monthly. Under the current law it is upwards of \$100,000 that has to have more immediate disclosure. So someone can provide \$40,000, \$50,000 or 60,000 and it is not disclosed until a six-month period. Under our laws they will be disclosed every month. I think that is very transparent and more open than the current provisions provide for.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Attorney-General, over 95 per cent of donations currently going to the ALP and the LNP will now under your changes no longer be disclosed. How is that being open and transparent?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chairman, as I said, it has served the federal system well and it has had no difficulties with it. If we implement it at the state level, we are having the added bonus of more continuous disclosure, which is what we promised. I think Queenslanders would expect a more continuous disclosure regime, which is exactly what they will have.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** My next question is to the acting CMC chair. Last year during the 2012 estimates the then CMC chair informed the committee that the CMC was developing a report on the issue of political donations, later released in December 2012 I understand. I also note the government's review of the Electoral Act 1992. Was the CMC asked to provide input into the Attorney-General's review of the electoral system?

**Dr Levy:** That was before my time, I am sorry. I have not come prepared to answer that. I know there was a report done and it has been completed, but apart from that I have no other knowledge. I will find out for you and take it on notice.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** You are happy to take that on notice?

**Dr Levy:** Yes.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you very much. My question is to the director-general. Director-General, I refer to the recent legislative changes for so-called accountability of industrial organisations. Is the director-general aware of any Queensland cases in the last decade where an industrial organisation was brought before the Queensland Industrial Commission over issues of alleged impropriety of office holders?

**Mr Sosso:** Leader of the Opposition, what do you mean in terms of 'impropriety'?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Any allegations about misuse of funds; any irregularities. I am happy for you to take it on notice.

**Mr Sosso:** I imagine that there may have been many over the years in terms of both trade unions and employer organisations in terms of individual matters. Is that what you are after?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes.

**Mr Sosso:** I will take it on notice and get back to you, Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you very much. My next question is to the director-general. I refer to recent hearings in the QIRC in relation to the Retail Traders Association, an industrial organisation representing employers, and I ask: when preparing legislation in relation to the accountability of

industrial organisations, did you or your department provide advice to the Attorney-General that the most significant allegations of misuse of funds by industrial office holders were not related to a union but, rather, an employer organisation?

**Mr Sosso:** I would have to seek the guidance of the chair, but I would have thought that any advice given to the minister would be confidential.

**CHAIR:** Indeed.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I have two questions for the Attorney-General. Attorney-General, I refer you to page 60 of the Service Delivery Statement which involves the office of the Information Commissioner. I understand the position of Information Commissioner is still vacant. Is it still vacant? And when do you anticipate the position will be filled?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. We have gone through an employment process where we are looking at potential candidates. I suspect in the not-too-distant future we will be able to make an announcement on that.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Attorney-General, I refer to your recent criticism of the proposed referendum question which is about recognising local government in the Commonwealth Constitution at the next federal election, and I ask: do you propose to have money allocated to fight the recognition of local government in the lead-up to the federal election?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, I seek your guidance. It is nothing to do with the justice portfolio.

**CHAIR:** Indeed. I do not know that it has any relevance, particularly when it is a federal issue in any event.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** The connection was that the Attorney-General has made public comments in the parliament and I thought it was appropriate to ask him a question. Did he intend to allocate funds from his budget to pursue his argument? I was after a yes or no.

**CHAIR:** He said it is not within his portfolio. I do not know whether you can take that much further, can you?

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I am happy with that.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** My next question is to the director-general. I refer to question on notice No. 13 in relation to savings made and reallocated by the department. Can the director-general confirm that—sorry, this is about industrial inspectors—that the ending of this contract with the Commonwealth saw the removal of the positions of industrial inspectors?

**Mr Sosso:** I will have to get some details, but basically that is the Commonwealth's responsibility. As the Leader of the Opposition would be aware, the responsibility for the bulk of industrial relations transitioned back to the Commonwealth after the passage of the federal legislation in 2005-06. We had a contract with the Commonwealth to carry out certain functions. At the expiration of that contract Fair Work Australia did the work that was being done by those particular inspectors. Currently, the inspectorate has 16 full-time-equivalent officers.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Can you outline to the committee, Director-General, the role of these industrial inspectors?

**Mr Sosso:** Whatever is prescribed by the legislation.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Perhaps you could provide a bit more advice, or you might have an officer here who could.

**Mr Sosso:** If you can bear with me, I will get the details for you soon.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I might ask the Attorney if that is okay. What impact have these cuts had and what impact will they have in the future on the workplace health and safety of Queensland workers?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** None.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No impact?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** None.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I refer the Attorney-General to the answer to question on notice No. 13 in which it was suggested that the cuts to the inspectors are justified because the federal legislation largely covers industrial relations in the private sector. Why, then, did the Queensland government set up a Building Construction Compliance Branch to oversee private sector employment when the federal government and the Fair Work Act cover those sections?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** They are two separate issues. The BCCB is for union militant activity on construction sites.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** You are being rather short in your responses, Attorney. That is unlike you. Is the Attorney suggesting that the state government has a role to play in trying to limit the role of unions in private sector workplaces but the state government does not have a role in the workplace health and safety of men and women working on Queensland work sites?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, I am not suggesting that.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** While our Acting Electoral Commissioner is at the table, I have a further question. I refer to page 74 of the Service Delivery Statement where it states—

The Electoral Commission of Queensland administers funds on behalf of the State which include:

...

- recovery of costs from local governments for the conduct of local government quadrennial elections and by-elections.

Then it states—

During 2012-13 the Commission collected Administered revenue which included:

...

- recovery of the annual costs of the local government elections branch from local governments.

Have you any idea how much money was recovered for conducting the recent local government elections?

**Mr van der Merwe:** Bear with me. I have it somewhere. In 2012-13 an amount of \$468,000 was invoiced to local governments relating to the establishment of the local government election branch. This amount will be remitted to Treasury once we receive it. Does that answer your question?

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Do you have any idea when it will be—

**Mr van der Merwe:** The invoices have gone out. We are just waiting for the councils to pay their debt.

**CHAIR:** As I understand from the committee, both the Electoral Commissioner and the CMC acting chair are not required to be here any longer. Gentlemen, thank you very much for your time. You may leave. Next I will go to Legal Aid Queensland. I see Mr John Britton at the back. I might ask the first question. Will the Attorney-General advise how Legal Aid Queensland is delivering quality legal services across Queensland?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Just one clarification, Mr Chair. Mr John Britton is the Legal Services Commissioner. I think you want to call Legal Aid to the table.

**CHAIR:** I do want Legal Aid, sorry. You are correct.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Just briefly, Legal Aid is doing an amazing job right across Queensland. They particularly participated in the recent floods—the January floods and, of course, the 2010-11 natural disasters. I congratulate all the staff on continuing to work with Legal Aid and on ensuring that we are providing the best access to justice that we can right across Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Will the Attorney-General outline the LAQ's investment in the private legal profession, which is something that is obviously important to Queenslanders?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Legal Aid has strong support for small business and the private legal profession, and it is demonstrated by the close work with the private profession to deliver quality legal services to financially disadvantaged people across Queensland. In 2012-13 we had some expenditure on private lawyers of \$58.3 million, more than half the Legal Aid Queensland total expenditure, including grants to community legal services.

**CHAIR:** Will you outline the LAQ's breakdown—how the LAQ is funded?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The anticipated funding for Legal Aid Queensland in 2013-14 from the Commonwealth and state governments is \$107.3 million. The Commonwealth funding for Legal Aid Queensland in 2013-14 is \$43.7 million, and this is used to provide legal services in Commonwealth areas, for instance family law. We have state funding of \$63.6 million, which comprises \$44.2 million in Queensland government grants and \$19.4 million from the legal practitioners interest fund.

**Mr CHOAT:** Can you provide details of the LAQ's capital program?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. The capital purchase program for 2013-14 is \$6.3 million. That includes \$3.8 million for the first phase of the refurbishment of its Brisbane office to ensure the building meets the Building Code requirements. They will invest \$0.4 million to finalise the Grants Management Systems Modernisation project. There is also a further \$0.8 million to be invested to maintain Legal Aid Queensland's business systems and to replace motor vehicles.

**Miss BARTON:** Mr Attorney, can you please comment on the review of the grants process that is currently being undertaken by LAQ?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. Legal Aid is mindful of the need to ensure value for money in purchasing legal services. To this end, Legal Aid Queensland has released a consultation paper on improving criminal law grants of aid. That paper states that trends in Legal Aid criminal law expenditure, as I have indicated, show that an increasing proportion of Legal Aid funding is directed to negotiated expensive case arrangements for larger criminal law trials.

**Mr WATTS:** I might ask a question in relation to the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation, an area close to my heart as a former publican.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** But you are a nightclub owner.

**Mr WATTS:** Yes, I have owned nightclubs and been a publican and worked in the club industry. I am also chair of the Toowoomba Liquor Industry Action Group, and my question relates to that. Could you advise what support is provided by the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation to Queensland's liquor accords?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. The government is serious about tackling the issues of alcohol related violence. We are very supportive of the liquor accords because that is really about industry and participants getting together in the one room to talk about all these issues from the point of view of licensing and also of people who want to go out and have a good night in a safe environment.

**Mr WATTS:** In relation to the expert panel review of liquor and gaming legislation and with reference to the discussion paper released earlier this year, could you give us a little bit of an update?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We appointed an independent liquor red-tape reduction panel, who are about to report to me in the next week or two, I suspect. That is all about strengthening the business community in Queensland to ensure people can go out and have a good night on the town in a safe environment as well as delivering on the government's agenda to reduce regulation and red tape. The Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation's policy is probably one of the most overregulated industries in Queensland. That is our basis for attacking that regulation.

**Mr CHOAT:** I have some questions that are probably more relevant to community groups and the interface with your department. In particular, something that I am very interested in—and I know it is something that is very important to my community—is what benefit recent changes to community liquor permits will have for community groups that are trying to raise money and do all those things that add benefit to the community.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** For the member's benefit, some 4½ thousand community groups across Queensland will no longer have to fill out community liquor permits, saving approximately 40,000 pages of regulation and red tape and a couple of hundred thousand dollars each year. Most Rotary Clubs, P&C groups and P&F groups in schools that want to hold fetes, trivia events and rodeos out in the bush will no longer have to have a community liquor permit, saving the community groups a lot of money and resulting in substantially less regulation.

**Mr CHOAT:** Could you update the committee on action taken in relation to Queensland's Gambling Community Benefit Fund with reference to the recent Auditor-General's report?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The Auditor-General has put out a damning report with respect to the way it is administered. We currently have boards in operation. We are going to be sorting out the mess once and for all. We are going to be looking at all manner of things in relation to those community funds. There is duplication—people getting funds twice. That is, unfortunately, something that we inherited, but we will fix it.

**Mr CHOAT:** I have a question with regard to the drink-safe precincts trial. Could you provide the committee with an update following the Auditor-General's report and the 18-month evaluation report?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I have extended the drink-safe precincts until September this year. I made Mr Robert Cavallucci, member for Brisbane Central, the chair of the committee. He is to report to me in the next few days on the future or potential model of the drink-safe precincts. I am a believer in that form of model but, as the Auditor-General has now put out a report, that was a rushed botched job from the start that we are now having to again fix.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** I was wondering if you could outline to the committee some of the recent changes within the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation, in particular, that promote greater customer service and a more friendly interface with all Queenslanders.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** This is all about Queenslanders, our customers, particularly the licensees—the small mum-and-dad business operators that are getting licences extended, paying new license fees, setting up corner restaurants and cafes. I recently attended a meeting in Brisbane with most of the licensing officers—about 70 staff of the OLGR. My word to all the staff was that they are doing a great job in changing the culture in the department in terms of becoming more proactive rather than reactive to these sorts of things. We also wanted to encourage the public servants, particularly the licensing officers, by giving them a level of responsibility to clear the deck. If they, in their own opinion, can see that things can be approved for small to medium enterprises without having to go through the whole bureaucratic process and the waiting time involved, I have given them the instruction and the power to do so.

**Miss BARTON:** Can I turn your attention to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions? Can you provide the committee with an update on the important work that they are doing including the number of matters that that office dealt with in the last financial year?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question through you, Mr Chair. The DPP are a very important office in the state. They are making sure that criminals are held accountable in terms of prosecutions. We have had recent media coverage in relation to the resourcing of the DPP. I am happy to advise the committee that the director of DPP and I have spoken on many occasions about resourcing. He is satisfied that the existing resources are satisfactory to deal with the numbers with which they are dealing. I will always look at the DPP, review the DPP, and if there are particular issues that we need to address, then we certainly will.

**Miss BARTON:** Mr Attorney, so you would advise the committee that the QDPP is adequately resourced to prosecute offenders, and particularly those who are the subject of lengthy and complex procedures?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** I would like to move to Crown Law, if you do not mind, Mr Attorney. Can you provide an update on the important work of the Crown Law office? I might say that in a past life I had a lot to do with the Crown Law office, and I wish to put on record the good work which they do. Could you perhaps outline that for this committee in a little more detail?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The Crown Law office does an amazing job. They are obviously the chief legal officers to government, providing all forms of legal advice to departments and particularly to me as first law officer of the state. They are challenged every day with particular issues. They have different divisions within Crown Law, and I do thank all the staff at Crown Law for the great job that they do in providing timely advice to the government.

Can I also again acknowledge in this Estimates Committee the great work that the Crown Law choir do. They are volunteers. The Crown Law choir is ever expanding. I had the pleasure of authorising an expenditure of about \$5,000 to the Crown Law choir so they can fit out with some new equipment, because they are really a showcase for Crown Law and also for the government. You will find that when we opened the Queen Elizabeth II Courts of Law, the Crown Law choir were there. At most government buildings at Christmas time they perform. This is all in their own time, of course, and they practise in their own time. I think it is one of the aspects of Crown Law which we should be immensely proud of.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** In relation to briefing council, will you provide an update on the impact of the government's policy to ensure value for money for the services provided and to ensure regional barristers are briefed where possible?



**Mr BLEIJIE:** One of the first things I did when I became Attorney-General was talk to the Bar Association, Mr Chair, through you. I made sure that if we have issues that are in regional Queensland, then the preference and the priority should be given to members at the regional bar and the profession when we are briefing out, and also we always have to look at value for money for Queenslanders.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Will you also provide an update to the committee regarding the important work undertaken by Crown Law, specifically as it relates to the Mental Health Review Tribunal and its associated jurisdictions?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** In relation to briefing me on those proceedings which have changed from the DPP to Crown Law, the Mental Health Act 2000 gives the Attorney-General the right of appearance in a range of different proceedings under the act relating to forensic patients. My role in those proceedings as prescribed in the Mental Health Act is also to represent the public interest. Since April 2013, Crown Law have been responsible for representing me in all proceedings at which I have the right of appearance before the Mental Health Tribunal, and that involves all of the work that they are doing in terms of the forensic orders made in relation to forensic patients who have been found unfit for trial or of unsound mind at the time that they committed serious criminal offences.

**CHAIR:** If I might start with a question in relation to the court process, which is a matter dear to my heart and to most Queenslanders. Will you advise and outline what steps have been taken to support the work of Queensland courts in administering justice in this fair state—who are the State of Origin winners, of course.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Our Queensland courts, including tribunals and registries, play a very important role in making sure that justice is administered according to law and that people have access to justice. In terms of additional resources to the courts, I have appointed an additional Supreme Court judge, Justice Jackson QC, who is doing a fantastic job in the commercial division. We have also appointed an additional three magistrates across Queensland, an additional coroner and an additional three members to the Industrial Relations Commission to deal with matters. I think we have got the right balance there now in terms of judicial resources.

With respect to finalising matters, clearance rates, as I earlier indicated to the committee, are certainly up from what they were when we came to government in 2012.

**Mr WATTS:** If I might just take you back to Crown Law briefly. Could you comment on the review undertaken by Crown Law which was aimed at increasing efficiency and decreasing costs within its mental health chambers?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The particular provisions there, as I indicated, used to be performed by the DPP in terms of the representation; now they are performed by Crown Law.

Just following on from my previous answer, this is quite a detailed and difficult job to some extent, because you are dealing with people who are there in the Mental Health Court because of particular issues. They may not be fit for trial, and there is a whole assessment process. Crown Law represent me on the occasions where I ought to be, and they provide particular advice with respect to individuals who are the subject of Mental Health Court orders, if the Mental Health Court orders are being reviewed, or if the Mental Health Court make a particular determination that I appeal. I do appeal on some occasions, just as I appeal other sentences in other courts in other jurisdictions. Crown Law is there to assist with those processes.

**Mr CHOAT:** Just going back to the question you answered before with regard to improvements and other work to support the courts, is there any evidence or are there any statistics that would evidence the effects of these improvements?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. As I said, when we look at the courts and their clearance rates, we have an unbelievable clearance rate at the moment. That is due to the good efforts of the Chief Justice, Chief Judge and the Chief Magistrate. The Magistrates Court is one of the fastest and busiest courts right across Queensland. We want to ensure that we have an efficient and effective justice system, and it is vital for the delivery of justice across Queensland. We are committed to the justice system and to ensuring that courts have the resources which they require to deliver outcomes.

As at 30 April 2013, the Supreme Court trial division alone had achieved outstanding clearance rates: 111.3 per cent in the civil jurisdiction; 123 per cent in the criminal jurisdiction. In the Court of Appeal, respective clearance rates of 92.5 per cent and 93.5 per cent were achieved in the civil and criminal jurisdictions. The District Court has achieved clearance rates that are exceptional: 107.1 per cent for the civil jurisdiction; the criminal clearance rate was 101.9 per cent. Those figures are above what was estimated. I will continue to work with the Chief Justice, Chief Judge and Chief Magistrate to ensure that our courts continue to operate as efficiently and as best they can.

**CHAIR:** If the committee will just indulge me with a moment of recollection. I remember being involved in the Moynihan process back in 2008 or so, and I am particularly interested in the Moynihan reforms—phase II, as we call them today—and the implementation of phase II. What impediments do you see and what is the likely timeline for that implementation?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I think the easy answer to that is that my approach to that is a steady-as-she-goes approach. I want to make sure that Moynihan phase I has been completed and that we see the outcomes of that before we implement phase II. We are actually talking to the Bar Association and the Law Society at the moment about how best we can implement phase II and when that should be done. No decision has yet been made.

**CHAIR:** Are you able to provide a brief outline as to when that is likely to happen? Will it be within 12 months or so?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I would expect that it would be on government's agenda for next year to start the debate and discussion.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Attorney, at last year's Estimates Committee we had a discussion about the Special Circumstances Court, which no longer exists. I was just wondering if you could outline to the committee what steps you and the department have put in place in relation to ensuring that those people with intellectual disabilities have access to justice through our legal system.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Every Queenslanders has just and equitable access to our justice system in every court.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** How many positions were there in the Special Circumstances Court?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I will seek your guidance, Mr Chair, but I abolished the Special Circumstances Court in the last budget estimates process, which was subject to this estimates debate. I do not think they are actually contained in this budget process, because it was abolished. I am happy to get a figure, but it is not meaningful, Mr Chair, because the court does not operate any more.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Attorney, earlier you mentioned the JP information sessions, and I note that you will be attending one of mine which is coming up in the very near future. I just wondered if you could expand a little bit more on that in relation to the committee. How important are those JP information sessions, and will there be any more resources given to that section of your department to ensure that JPs are indeed getting the information that they need?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I think JPs have more resources in the JP branch than they have ever had before. In fact, I think I gave them an additional \$3 million. I will stand corrected on that, but I think it is an extra \$3 million. We have outsourced training, which has freed up capacity. We are doing more JP training courses around Queensland. We conducted one a few weeks ago up in North Queensland with 800 JPs. I have written to the JPs across Queensland twice now, because they are an impressive and important part of our justice system, and we continue to hold them in greater stead than they have ever been before.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** My question is to the director-general. Could you please state to the committee how many full-time equivalent positions there are currently in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, and does how that compare to June last year?

**Mr Sosso:** Those figures are just coming. While we are waiting for them, can I answer your previous question more fully, Leader of the Opposition?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes, thank you.

**Mr Sosso:** The referral arrangements in the transitional phase from when the Commonwealth took over most of the state's industrial relations jurisdiction included contractual compliance service delivery by a Queensland industrial relations inspectorate, which included creating an awareness of employer obligations in the new national workplace relations system, wage complaint investigations and pro-active audits.

I have some figures in that respect. For transitional education visits: in 2010 there were 10,000; in 2011 there were 5,000; and 2012 there were 2,500; so they were going down. In terms of audits: there were 1,000 in 2010; 1,000 in 2011; and 717 in 2012. Wage complaints were around 1800 to 1950.

With respect to the question of what the inspectorate is now doing—having those matters transition back to the Commonwealth totally—they are now focused on long service leave entitlements, child employment, private employment agents and trading hours. I do not know if that has answered your question.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Can you just repeat those areas again?

**Mr Sosso:** The four areas are: long service leave entitlements, child employment, private employment agents and trading hours.

Just going back to the question you were asking, Leader of the Opposition, you asked how many full-time positions there were last year as compared to this year.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes, thank you.

**Mr Sosso:** As at 30 June 2012 there were 4,856 actual full-time equivalents in the department; as at 28 June 2013, there were 4,278.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Sorry, but can you just repeat those figures?

**Mr Sosso:** Yes: 4,856 as at 30 June 2012 to 4,278 as at 28 June 2013.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Could you please give me details about where those positions have been lost from your department? Do you have a breakdown of that?

**Mr Sosso:** That one I will have to take on notice because I would need to go through each of the various areas of the department to extrapolate that information out.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Because that looks like it is over 500 positions that have gone.

**Mr Sosso:** If I was to put it in human terms, which is always interesting, as at 30 June 2013 468 positions were made redundant, of which 427 employees elected to accept a voluntary redundancy and 34 elected to be placed in alternative employment. Of the 34 who elected to basically remain in the Queensland Public Service, 31 of those 34 have been found jobs as of this time. Three we are still working on. The bulk of those redundancies applied to the State Reporting Bureau.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes, of course. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** Attorney, information from Queensland state school cleaners from Brisbane and Ipswich has been provided to my office to advise that they are being told formally that they need to use up their long service leave and that they need to use up their sick leave. They are also being advised to get themselves an ABN in readiness for this government contracting out school cleaning, and I ask: how does this fit with the commitments the government has given school cleaners that their employment is absolutely guaranteed for the life of their current agreement, expiring in 2015? I note the laughter of David Fraser at my question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chairman, I have listened to the question. I fail to see how it is relevant in my budget process. I am not responsible for the Public Service Commission or Public Service IR and I would ask for your ruling on it, Mr Chairman.

**Mrs MILLER:** Mr Chairman, I refer to the SDS at page 6 titled 'Expenses' and then 'Fair and Safe Work'.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, could you just help me with that?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes. I am referring to the SDS at page 6 under 'Departmental Budget Summary'. It says 'Fair and Safe Work' under 'Expenses'.

**CHAIR:** Okay. Now, what was your question again, if you can summarise it for me?

**Mrs MILLER:** My question is this: information from Queensland state school cleaners from the Brisbane and Ipswich area has been provided to my office to advise that they are being told formally that they need to use up their long service leave and use up their sick leave and they are being advised to get themselves an ABN in readiness for contracting out of school cleaning, and I ask: how

does this fit with the commitments the government has given school cleaners that their employment is absolutely guaranteed for the life of the current agreement, expiring in 2015? This has to do with Fair and Safe Work.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Through you, Mr Chair, it does not.

**Mrs MILLER:** It does.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Fair and Safe Work is a completely separate provision in my department. I have tried to link it the best I can to answer the question, but I am not the education minister, I am not the Public Service Commissioner and I am not responsible for the Public Service Act.

**CHAIR:** All right. Question answered. Next question.

**Mrs MILLER:** I just note that the minister has refused to answer the question and I am sure United Voice would be very interested in that.

**CHAIR:** Member—

**Mrs MILLER:** My next question to the Attorney is: what are the government's real plans for contracting out, if this is the advice being given to school cleaners right now in 2013? I refer to page 6 of the SDS under 'Departmental Budget Summary' in relation to Fair and Safe Work.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, I think I am following the issue and the Attorney has just indicated that you have to ask another minister, that it is not within his province. The reason I am saying it at this stage is because it really has been asked and it has been answered. To ask it again does not necessarily make it more important.

**Mrs MILLER:** Okay. I will go on to another question.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have another question for the director-general, please.

**CHAIR:** Indeed.

**Mrs MILLER:** Director-General, would you be able to advise our committee whether there has been an increase in the numbers of officers who have applied for stress leave or sick leave since the LNP took government in March 2012?

**Mr Sosso:** No, I could not and I do not know whether those figures would be available. I will use my best endeavours to find them, but can I say that if I get any more questions my stress leave might be on the cards.

**Mrs MILLER:** Director-General, thank you so much for your enlightenment. I have another question to ask the director-general, please, because this is very important to female officers of the Public Service. Could you tell me the numbers of officers who are on maternity leave and also the numbers of officers who are on paternity leave, because this is a very real issue in our community?

**CHAIR:** If I might just clarify that, I assume we are referring to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice's department only.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, that is right.

**CHAIR:** Okay. I was just making sure.

**Mr Sosso:** I do not know whether or not we have those figures, but if we do I am happy to supply them. I will have to ask the department to try to extrapolate that from the leave applications. There could be some privacy issues in that as well, but if I can obtain the figures for you, member for Bundamba, I will do so.

**Mrs MILLER:** Director-General, I am not after people's names; I am just basically wanting to know the numbers, because it is such an important issue in the community.

**Mr Sosso:** Sure. I am just meaning that I do not know whether or not there are any privacy issues—not referring to names but just the global issue. But if we have those figures and can extrapolate them, I will take it on notice and will supply them to you.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, I thank you very much, because I do note that the department, certainly in years gone past, was a leader in this field. In fact, the department had at one stage a breastfeeding room for female officers of the department which was much appreciated by them. So it is of personal interest to me, of course.

I would also like to ask the director-general about the training budget, and of course those of us who are MPs here are certainly aware that this parliament provides training for Public Service officers in relation to bills and indeed the budget process. Can you advise the committee whether or not the department sends its officers here to the parliament to undertake that training?

**Mr Sosso:** Yes, we do.

**Mrs MILLER:** Can you also get the figures as to how many officers have undertaken that training or intend to? It is okay to take that on notice.

**Mr Sosso:** Yes. I have just asked if we have it on hand. We do not. I can take it on notice.

**Mrs MILLER:** Okay. I have another question, Director-General, in relation to the media or the public relations unit of your department. Do you have such a unit or officers employed in that capacity? If so, how many and what levels are they?

**Mr Sosso:** We certainly have a communications area in the department—a central one—and there are some communications officers in other areas. For example, it is very important in the consumer affairs area, given the important work they do in alerting the public to unsafe practices and so forth, and we do have a small area in head office, so to speak, in the State Law Building. But the focus of all of those areas is not on public relations; it is on communicating a message out to the community. I do not know if we have the figures with us, so could you just clarify the figures you wanted again?

**CHAIR:** Excuse me, Director-General, but the member for Bulimba is leaving because of a previous appointment and expects to be back at four o'clock. I say that simply for the record. Thank you.

**Mr Sosso:** So if you could just clarify, member for Bundamba?

**Mrs MILLER:** What I am seeking, please—and I know all departments have communications and PR type units—is the number of people within those units and their levels. I am not interested in their names; I just want to know basically the organisational structure of that particular unit, the number of people and the levels of their Public Service classification.

**Mr Sosso:** Yes, I will endeavour to provide that on notice.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you. I have one final question in relation to the Exhibition, which is coming up next month. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General has always, to the best of my knowledge, had a stand at the Exhibition. What are the projected costs if the department is going to go to the Exhibition this year?

**CHAIR:** The presumption is, of course, that you are going to have a stand.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes.

**Mr Sosso:** Yes, we are going to the Exhibition this year. We are just in the process of organising that. As to the cost, it will depend on overtime and the like and what goodies the department provides. So at this stage it is—it would only be a guesstimate—not a large amount of money, but we certainly will be enthusiastically participating in the Ekka.

**Mrs MILLER:** As the department always does. Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Nicklin.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. My question is to the Attorney-General. I take him to page 10 of the Service Delivery Statement where it refers to the Liquor, Gaming and Fair Trading section of his department, and I ask: Minister, are you able to advise how many staff work in this department where their work is focused on ensuring compliance with the provision of not providing alcohol to intoxicated people? So I suppose I mean not just people sitting in offices doing paperwork but people out in the community monitoring hotels or places where alcohol is sold.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank you for the question. I will take that on notice and get the response in the required time frame to the member.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Thank you. I also would be keen, Attorney-General, if you would be able to provide information in relation to the breakdown of where those staff are working from, in particular the Sunshine Coast. Unfortunately, regularly we see on the news the problems of alcohol fuelled violence. Only recently I was at a community meeting and a constituent asked, 'Why is it that people are able to access alcohol if they are already under the influence?' I am keen to know how many

people are out there, on the Sunshine Coast in particular, monitoring the sale of alcohol. Attorney-General, I am also keen to know what hours they work and in particular if there is any quarantining on hours of work or days and times for overtime reasons or whatever meaning they are not able to work.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I will take that on notice.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I also take the minister to page 15 relating to Land Court activities in terms of the clearance rate and the finalisation and lodgements percentage—that is, 95 per cent. Minister, can you clarify how many staff work in the Land Court and what funding is provided to run the Land Court in Queensland?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you for the question. That is a figure I do not have off the top of my head. I am happy to get it by day's end for the member's benefit.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Yes, I am happy with that. The reason I ask is that, as a result of previous government decisions for significant infrastructure projects, a lot of land on the Sunshine Coast has been purchased by the state government. Many of these matters end up heading for the Land Court, and the advice I have received is that the backlog is significant. So my question, Minister, is: are you able to clarify the capacity of the Land Court to deal with many of the problems which are currently waiting to proceed to court, or do you have any information at all?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you for the question. I have regularly met with Carmel MacDonald, the President of the Land Court. I am not aware that the backlog is a potential or major issue down there, but if it is we will address it and fix it. Unless the DG has particular issues, I think the DG is meeting with Ms MacDonald next week. I was at a function two nights ago with acting President Smith and he did not particularly raise it with me.

If I can just give some information here, the majority of matters that contribute to the backlog are complex land valuation appeals that have failed to reach settlement through the court's alternative resolution dispute process. So the majority of the backlog is the complex land valuation appeals and they have not been able to settle through the process of dispute resolution relating to the compulsory acquisition of land and matters relating to the objections against the compensation for mining leases. The time line—obviously, a lot of the matters and the progression of those matters are in the parties' hands about how far they take the matter. Most require intensive case management. The Land Court is in regular contact with the parties. So it may not necessarily be because of a resourcing issue of the Land Court; it is because of the parties not being able to reach settlement. But we will get you the status on the backlogs.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Thank you. If I can just follow up on that. One of the real issues that supports the concern is the high turnover in the state government. I know that it is not your ministerial responsibility; it is another minister's responsibility. The legal team and the constituents have been through a whole lengthy process and the next minute staff from the government have moved on and they have to go through it all again and they are just throwing up their hands and saying, 'This is a disaster.'

If I can take the minister to page 23 of the Service Delivery Statements in relation to the criminal injuries compensation scheme. Minister, how many applicants are there still waiting for finalisation? Is there a set amount of money provided to fund this or does it simply come out of consolidated revenue?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. In terms of how many applications we have, off the top of my head I cannot give the member those details. We will endeavour to get back to the member with those matters. With these types of matters, if they are a simple compensation mechanism by which you can see the compensation that is payable, then they generally get paid, I suspect, in a relatively short period of time and I sign off on those. If it is a more complex matter, or if, in fact, there is a dispute about the compensation or the criminal injuries that are applicable, then I guess it is going to take a little longer. But I will get back to the member in terms of if there is a backlog and the average time those particular applications take to get through the system.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Whilst on that matter, under that heading 'Criminal Injuries Compensation' it states—

If the offender was not known or could not be located or if the offender was financially unable to pay the compensation, the victim could apply for an ex-gratia payment of compensation.

Is that a difficult hurdle to overcome? Is there a high onus put on the applicant to prove that the offender is not financially able to pay the compensation? What steps are the normal process?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you for the question. The application is made. It is not a too onerous process. The funding through the Victim Assist process is paid out. The reason that the provisions are there to pay the ex gratia payment is that we do not want victims to wait until even the state tries to track down the offender. So it was decided by the previous government with the new system we have under the new Victim Assist regime and the criminal compensation regime that the money just gets paid out. At least the victim is then compensated. Then we do, in fact, add it to SPER for the offender. A large proportion of the SPER debt—which is not under my portfolio, but it is there—is, in fact, chased. So we try to track down the offender to pay back the taxpayers' money.

I just have some details here. As at 4 June 2013 the ODR Program has issued over 2,775 liability notices under the VOCAA, which is Victim Assist, to respondents to orders for compensation under the COVA/code. With the repealed schemes, with a value of over \$69.6 million, a debt is established under VOCAA on the issuing of a liability notice. The ODR Program has referred 2,630 notices to COVA/code respondents to the State Penalties Enforcement Register for enforcement with a value of \$65.1 million. SPER has recovered over \$2.73 million from the COVA/code respondents to liability notice to it, as per the SPER report dated 4 June. The ODR Program has issued 530 liability notices to convicted offenders to recover financial assistance payments made under the new financial assistance scheme, with a value of over \$3.17 million. Finally, SPER has recovered over \$144,000 from the VOCAA respondents to the new financial assistance scheme to the liability notices referred to it.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Thank you.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Chair, that is our 25 minutes time. It is now over to the government.

**CHAIR:** Any questions? No, we do not have any questions

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Sorry, the government has no further questions?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It is really an estimates for the opposition.

**CHAIR:** We have no questions at this time.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No, it is actually split between the government and the opposition. I am happy to keep going, but I am just making it very clear—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Over to you.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:**—that it is actually the time allocated to the government and no government member is prepared to ask a question. Thank you.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Maybe it is the fact, chair, that the opposition does not have any questions ready to go.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes, we do.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, we do.

**CHAIR:** Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I refer to page 8 of the SDS where it details the removal of \$5.628 million in funding in 2014-15, an increase from the withdrawal of \$2.147 million this financial year. Attorney-General, will you guarantee that the withdrawal of this funding will not involve redundancies?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you for the question. Can the opposition leader provide some specifics? That is just an average sum. It is hard to give any guarantees, particularly on a figure where there are no specifics behind it.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Can you explain the withdrawal?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I suspect that the best person to answer that would be the director-general, who considers the budget and has those referrals. So I will give it to the director-general, if you like, to assist with the answering of that question.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes, I am happy.

**Mr Sosso:** Yes, I am just getting some of information myself about the ubiquitous expense measures. Perhaps while I am getting that information you might move on to the next one. Leader of the Opposition, I will get back to you in a minute.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am happy to move on, but it is going to be another budget related question. I refer to the cash flow statement for Legal Aid Queensland and capital expenditure costs. Why is there a delay for the refurbishment of Legal Aid Queensland's Brisbane office? Is this having an impact on service delivery?

**Mr Sosso:** I am personally unaware of any delay in the refurbishment of Legal Aid's office. I am regularly in contact with Legal Aid Queensland and in conjunction with them I am very keen to ensure that their work is able to be maintained seamlessly and appropriately. Clearly, I am unaware of any problems so far as their accommodation is concerned, but I will speak to Legal Aid in the lunchbreak and find out if there are any problems. I am unaware of any.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** And you will get back to us after the lunchbreak.

**Mr Sosso:** Certainly, if there are any problems.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you. My next question is to the director-general. Director-General, in relation to the Regional Community Association Moreton Bay application to the Supreme Court that the organisation be shut down, when were you made aware of that application?

**Mr Sosso:** Could you just provide me with more details of that, please?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** This is the application to the Supreme Court to close the Regional Community Association Moreton Bay.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Is it before the court?

**CHAIR:** I am just wondering. I think the question can probably be answered, though probably not much more than that, because the question being asked is when did the director-general know about the application. So it does not really refer to what the result is. That is about as far as you can take it.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is correct.

**CHAIR:** So if you know when you became aware of it—if you did become aware of it—

**Mr Sosso:** I am not aware of that application.

**CHAIR:** Okay. That is the answer.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** So you will find out for us? You were not made aware at all? There was no departmental briefing note?

**Mr Sosso:** All I can say is to the best of my knowledge I am unaware of it. But, then again, I get many departmental briefing notes. But that one does not ring a bell.

**CHAIR:** I think the question was specifically asked of you and you are not aware of it. I think that really answers the question.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** My next question is to the director-general. In allocating the department's budget to various areas of the department's responsibilities and administering the criminal justice system, did the director-general consider what impact the rising unemployment figure could have on crime rates?

**CHAIR:** The presumption there is that there is a rising unemployment figure. Are you able to answer it that on that basis—on that assumption?

**Mr Sosso:** Can you just repeat that, Leader of the Opposition?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Sure. In allocating the department's budget—so you have the decision to work out how to distribute the funding to the best of your capabilities—

**Mr Sosso:** Yes.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Are you taking into account, in administering the criminal justice system, the rising unemployment figure and the impact that that could have on crime rates?

**Mr Sosso:** Clearly, we take into account the workload of the courts and if there is a rise in unemployment, which has a correlation with an increase in crime, which means increased lodgements and work for the court, then it means increased assets, increased finances and increased personnel. So if there is a correlation between unemployment and increase in work in the department, there will be a commensurate allocation of resources.

**CHAIR:** The member for Bundamba

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you very much. My question is to the director-general. I refer to page 4 of the SDS—



In preparing a response to that review, is the department using the extensive parliamentary report as the starting point or has the department been instructed in any way to develop a response based on specific outcomes that may have been requested by the Attorney-General or the government?

**Mr Sosso:** I think that is a question of policy, Mr Chair.

**Mrs MILLER:** All right. I will ask the Attorney-General.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, are you asking—

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, I will ask the Attorney-General now.

**CHAIR:** Just one second. The director-general has said that it is a matter of policy.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, and now I will ask the Attorney-General.

**CHAIR:** Do you mind if I just read it first?

**Mrs MILLER:** It is about workers compensation.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, you did not specify where it was and I have found it.

**Mrs MILLER:** So my question is now to the Attorney-General, given the director-general's response that it is a policy matter. Are you using the extensive parliamentary report as a starting point or have you requested the department to pursue your own end result?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you for the question. We will be responding to the parliamentary report in the statutory time frame.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you very much for your clever answer, Mr Attorney. I would just like to ask the Attorney and the director-general, but I will ask the director-general first: has the director-general provided advice to other departments about requirements involved in any possible outsourcing, contestability—whatever you may call it—including federal requirements that staff cannot simply be rehired in a private capacity with lesser pay and conditions?

**Mr Sosso:** No.

**Mrs MILLER:** Okay. My question is also to the director-general. Are you aware whether there has been any advice prepared to other departments along the lines of existing employees to get an ABN number in preparation for outsourcing or contestability in relation to any requirements? Here I am referring to, for example, public servants who may have been sacked who may set up their own company and who then come back to consult the department.

**Mr Sosso:** I think in answer to the member for Bundamba, the answer to the first part of the question is no, but if a person who has either previously worked with the department—or has not worked for the department—comes back to perform contracting or consultancy work for the department in a private capacity, then in the normal course of events an ABN number would be required.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, I am aware of that. Can I ask a follow-up question in relation to that. If you have had a public servant who has been sacked or retrenched by the department who then comes back through a third party—like a consulting company—to work for the department, what is the department's stance in relation to that?

**Mr Sosso:** I do not think the department would have a stance, as such. I mean, obviously there would be issues if a person came back into the department who was terminated in terms of the income tax commissioner. But if a person who has received a voluntary or involuntary redundancy payment then obtains work for a private company and, say, for example, were tendering for work and they were a person who fitted the skill base, then I do not know whether it would be appropriate to discriminate against that person, provided there was that degree of separation and it was transparent.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you so much. Thank you very much.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I refer the Attorney-General to page 101 of the Service Delivery Statement in relation to the Public Trustee. I note there is reference to 16 regional offices in Queensland. At the bottom of page 101 there is reference to maintaining its self-funding status through delivery of a strong financial performance. Then over on page 102 there is reference to further investments in upgrading regional offices throughout the state to provide a more efficient front-line service to Queensland regional communities. I think that is very commendable. My question to the Attorney-General is: what regional offices are scheduled for upgrading? Do you know what dollars are proposed to be allocated to these sites?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We will find the detail. Off the top of my head I do not know what offices or the scheduled upgrades. We will try to find the details in a relatively short period of time. We might have some details here for the member for Nicklin.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** We have a very important office in Currie Street, Nambour, Attorney-General.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I see that on my list here, member: Brisbane, Brendale, Bundaberg, Cairns, Gladstone, Ipswich, Mackay, Maryborough, Mount Isa, Nambour, Redcliffe, Rockhampton, Sunshine Coast—Birtinya in my electorate—Toowoomba and Townsville. The Public Trustee is committed to meeting the Queensland government's objective for a wide range of quality and efficient services. For these reasons the Public Trustee is investigating the need for increased service delivery in the Brisbane metropolitan area to meet the growing population of retirees and the greater population of South-East Queensland. The trustee's office operates a program of continual refurbishment and upgrade of its locations in accordance with the strategic asset management plan to ensure the comfort and safety of clients and staff. I think the question is in relation to the strategic asset management plan, which we will make a copy of and provide details for you. I think your question really is: is Nambour being upgraded? I will find out.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Thank you.

**Miss BARTON:** Mr Attorney, I note that you have called three inquiries, one of which was notably the Carmody child protection inquiry. Might you be able to provide the committee with an update on the implementation of the recommendations from that Carmody inquiry, please?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. The Carmody commission of inquiry was the first inquiry that I set up with respect to making sure Queensland can be the safest place to raise a child. It was talking about child safety in the state. Commissioner Carmody over the 12 months did an extraordinary and excellent job in bringing down over 100 recommendations with respect to making sure Queensland can be the safest place to raise a child. He produced two documents, one of which was the majority of the recommendations with respect to child safety. The second document he produced was with particular reference to term of reference 3(e), which members may know as being referred to as the Heiner affair. The terms of reference were changed slightly during the proceedings.

I can advise the committee today that, with respect to recommendation 3(e) in his report, Commissioner Carmody comments that the shredding of the Heiner documents generated one of Queensland's most enduring public controversies. The commissioner rightly makes further comment that the inclusion of 3(e) in the commission of inquiry's terms of reference was intended to authoritatively resolve, once and for all, a long-standing and divisive debate about the adequacy, propriety and lawfulness of a 1990 cabinet decision. I note Commissioner Carmody's specific recommendation that the issue whether any criminal conduct was associated with any response of or action taken by the executive government between 1 January 1988 and 31 December 1990 in relation to industrial disputes and youth detention centres or like facilities be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Commissioner Carmody's report and recommendations followed a comprehensive review of a significant body of evidence, noting that the inquiry was not intended as a substitute for usual criminal justice functions of the Director of Public Prosecutions or the authority of the courts.

Given the above and the consideration of term of reference 3(e), I have formed the view that it would be entirely appropriate for Commissioner Carmody's report on term of reference 3(e) to be referred today to the Director of Public Prosecutions to consider whether a prosecution is warranted as a matter of law and whether it is in the overall public interest. I will be writing to the Director of Public Prosecutions today. Of course, this results from a cabinet decision of the Goss government in 1988 to 1990, and I will be writing to the Director of Public Prosecutions referring that matter and then leaving it in the hands of the independent Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to ascertain whether it is in the public interest and whether as a matter of law prosecutions should take place. Thank you for the question.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba?

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you very much. I refer to SDS page 5 in relation to public holidays. Attorney, you talked earlier about the change to public holidays in Queensland. I am asking whether or not you have conducted any inquiries into the effect this would have on communities such as Barcaldine and the economic consequences for a small community relying on that substantial tourist event. It really is very big in Barcaldine, Attorney.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you for the question. The issue of public holidays has been the subject of much debate in the last few years. The former government conducted an inquiry. As we travelled around the state, even in opposition, I was always told about the discomfort of people having so many holidays in the first half of year and not the second half of the year. The government resolved to fix that for the workers of the state. They have the same amount of holidays but over a better mix of time periods.

**CHAIR:** A follow-up question, member for Bundamba?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, there is a follow-up question here. You say here that it reduces the concentration of holidays in the first half of the year. Aren't there exactly the same number of public holidays in the first half of the year after the change as there were before?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, because Labour Day is being taken from May and put in October. Therefore, that is a reduction of one—and I am not replacing Labour Day with anything in the first half of the year, so no.

**Mrs MILLER:** I would like to go on to another area, please, in relation to retrospective legislation, particularly page 5 of the SDS and reference to the legal services area developing and coordinating proposals for justice related legislation. I ask: when you were developing the Industrial Relations (Transparency and Accountability of Industrial Organisations) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2013, what advice were you given by the department about the proposed retrospective application of the legislation to trade unions, given that those provisions applied only to employee organisations and not to employer organisations?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you for the question. In essence, it was not essentially retrospective because the legislation said 'in the current financial year'. So, as normal, reports would be in the current financial year, so from 1 July last year to 30 June 2013. So it really was not retrospective because it was the current financial year which they would have had to report on, anyway.

**Mrs MILLER:** When you released your media statement on 30 April and said 'under the amendments, four publicly available, retrospective registers will be set up and required to be kept up to date from 1 July 2012', you were perfectly comfortable with the fact that some of those changes would be retrospective, because some of them were?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** There are strong arguments for transparency and accountability, and Queenslanders would expect nothing less on this particular issue.

**Mrs MILLER:** On 2 July this year you told journalists that retrospective legislation was repugnant and did not work. So the decision could not be overturned?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you for the question. I will make a couple of points, if I may. I note that Paul Howes recently has made submissions—quite public submissions, in fact—in relation to accountability of workplaces and unions and, quite extraordinarily, Paul Howes has come out challenging Mr Bill Shorten, my federal counterpart, about why Bill Shorten's legislation, when looking at union accountability, has not been as strong as the federal coalition's response. It is quite extraordinary that you have a union official, who essentially determines what happens at the federal level on most occasions with the Labor Party, coming out attacking the Labor Party because the fair work laws—and I quote from the newspaper article—'failed to match Tony Abbott's union accountability measures'. I seek leave to table a copy of that for the committee's purposes.

**CHAIR:** Leave is granted.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** In continuing that, when Queenslanders ask about union accountability and why these sorts of measures are in place, one only has to refer to this newspaper article put in by the Electrical Trades Union of Queensland. The member for Bundamba espouses in parliament on many occasions how good the ETU are.

**Mrs MILLER:** They are.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** This type of article, with Hitler as its centrepiece, about government policy—I personally rang the Jewish Council chair the morning this appeared in the *Courier-Mail*—and this type of expenditure is the sort of thing Queenslanders are sick and tired of seeing, particularly when you look back at what happened in Germany with Hitler at the time. That is why we are looking at union accountability and transparency. That is why.

**CHAIR:** Are you tabling that?

**Mrs MILLER:** I have a follow-up question.

**CHAIR:** Just excuse me. Is that being tabled?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, Mr Chair.

**Mrs MILLER:** Have you ever as Attorney-General and Minister for Justice introduced any retrospective legislation into this parliament?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Yes.

**Mrs MILLER:** Can you tell us what bills or acts they are?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Various bills require various provisions. The most recent was probably the CMC negligence rectification bill that we introduced to fix up the issues of the CMC problems with the unlawful disclosure of particular information. That was retrospective.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have another question. I refer to page 25 of the SDS. Attorney-General, is the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre expected to come in on budget?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It is interesting, because these questions that are being asked by the opposition are real dorothy dixers. The Cleveland Youth Detention Centre should have been opened by now.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** You should be able to answer them, then.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am answering it. The Cleveland Youth Detention Centre should have been opened by now, but because of a budget blow-out by the former government it is going to be two or three years delayed. We are about to open, in the not-too-distant future, the very first section of it but really the hold-up and contractual dispute was occurring under the former government and not this government. We have sorted it out. We have appointed, through the director-general, a proper procurement officer outside to sort all the issues out. The issues haven't happened in the last 16 months; they happened actually under the former government.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have a follow-up question. Attorney-General, can you please advise us whether there has been any reduction in staff to the Magistrates Court in Queensland?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** In terms of the fiscal repair tasks that the state government had, I suspect the question taken on notice earlier by the director-general, with a difference between the two figures, will indicate, when the answer is provided, where those staff are located. I think that is what the director-general intended to do with the question that was taken on notice earlier.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have a follow-up question to the director-general. Director-General, are exit interviews conducted with those people who are given the chop by this government?

**Mr Sosso:** I just wanted to absolutely confirm that.

**CHAIR:** Just before you answer that, member for Bundamba, could you refer me to the part of the budget that relates to?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, I can.

**CHAIR:** Perhaps what you might do is save that question for after lunch. I intend to make a brief statement in relation to the Leader of the Opposition and member for Inala making a statement which really was inappropriate in a committee meeting such as this. It was about government members running out of questions. With respect, I do not know that it has so much run out of questions but we do not quite have the facilities that the opposition have in relation to having questions put.

**Mrs MILLER:** Nonsense!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** There are 74 members of the government.

**CHAIR:** What I have done so far is adopt a 20-minute time in order to ensure the opposition got a fair run.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** They can use their 20 minutes.

**CHAIR:** In order to allow the opposition to have an even more fair run, they have actually had more time than that. I think at this point in time, as the 20 minutes appears now not to be necessary, we might simply ask questions as they fall. Thank you very much for that. We might adjourn for lunch.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Just before we go to lunch, can I thank you for that commentary as well, because, as the opposition leader would know being a former minister, we have folders of dorothy dixers, but my view is that this is the one chance the opposition actually have to grill the Attorney.

**Mrs MILLER:** We are more than happy to keep going.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** We are happy to ask questions. The government ran out of questions.

**CHAIR:** I might just interject. I do not know that the government has run out of questions. I think they may need time to reflect on some of the answers. We just do not have the support staff to be able to have them faxed in.

**Mrs MILLER:** You have a whole government. You have every public servant in Queensland available to you.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** If I can finish what I was saying?

**CHAIR:** Mr Attorney?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** This really should be an opportunity for the opposition.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** We look forward to coming back after lunch.

**Mrs MILLER:** You have been embarrassed and you do not like it, do you?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, I thought it would be good to afford the opportunity, rather than 20-minute brackets, for the opposition to have the whole day.

**Mrs MILLER:** Your nose is growing, Pinocchio.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** As the Deputy Premier said yesterday, he rarely gets a question. I rarely get a question. I saw the opposition struggling because I saw their staffers running questions over so I thought it would be good for them to have more opportunity to ask questions.

**CHAIR:** On that note, Mr Attorney and members of the committee, we will adjourn until two o'clock.

#### **Proceedings suspended from 1.17 pm to 2.01 pm**

**CHAIR:** The estimates hearing of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee is now resumed. We will continue with the consideration of the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. Mr Attorney, can you please be so kind as to update the committee on the JP QCAT pilot program, which certainly is relevant to Ipswich where I am from.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank you for the question. As I indicated earlier, the JP QCAT trial is in five locations across Queensland. I recall the event that I attended with you out Ipswich way. It was a Queensland Justices Association event where I made the announcement that Ipswich would be a trial site. We now have JPs in these trial sites who are conducting minor civil disputes under \$5,000. There is a real sense of common sense—if I can use that expression—in the JP QCAT trial. There is a great deal of excitement both in the processes at QCAT and also in JPs. We are now receiving expressions of interest from people outside the trial sites who want to engage or who are asking if a trial site can come near them. In fact, we are getting responses from people who now want to participate in the trial sites in their local area.

We have approximately 93,000 JPs in Queensland with four categories: JP (Magistrates Court), JP (Qualified), commissioner for declarations and, of course, JP (C.dec). We have recently written to all the JPs trying to formulate a response whereby we can transfer the JP (C.dec) which were still under the old system to the commissioner of declarations. We are going to grant them a stamp and an official number at no cost. The government will be providing the cost of that. That is about making sure that JPs can continue to do the great work that they do.

I envisage that if the JP QCAT trial is as successful as I am being told in terms of the four out of five trial sites so far, then we would very much like to roll those out in other jurisdictions and right around Queensland, because they are local people. They are local JPs who have gone through either the examination process or the course and are serving the community and saving the justice department and justice generally hundreds and thousands of dollars right around Queensland. Could you imagine a world where we did not have our JPs and commissioners of declaration? Obviously, I am biased because I am a JP (Qualified). I am really looking forward to the JP QCAT trial coming to a conclusion so we can assess it. Anecdotally as indicated now, we would envisage that we would be able to roll that out to other areas right around Queensland, because certainly there is a sense of great enthusiasm behind the program.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Member for Inala?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Can I please call the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner? Good afternoon, Mr Cocks. Thank you for joining us. I refer to the SDS at page 40 about the work of the Anti-Discrimination Commission. I notice your main objectives there are to manage complaints under the act and to deliver training to business, government and community, and promote discussion on human rights. Could you outline some of the issues and the types of complaints that have come before the commission over the past year? Can you give the committee an update about the work and the role, as you see it, of the Anti-Discrimination Commission in Queensland.

**Mr Cocks:** Thank you for the question. Broadly, the types of complaints that have come to the commission have been very consistent over the years. The majority of complaints are in the area of employment and discrimination, and around impairment—about 25 per cent—and then around sexual harassment and race, around the 10 to 12 per cent area of complaint. That has been a fairly consistent area of complaint over a number of years in the commission. We have a number of new initiatives that we have been rolling out over the past couple of years to try to engage more with the community, particularly in a light-touch way, if you like, working with them to create spaces where the community themselves can come together and try to work through their issues, particularly in trying to be a more inclusive and a fair community.

Another thing that we have done is we have developed a trial education project for rights and responsibilities that is targeted at young people in school, probably around the grade 10 through to grade 12 area. That is a resource that we have worked on with Education Queensland, Catholic Education and the independent schools in providing a resource, particularly around their rights and responsibilities and work. We have seen some complaints around young people, in particular, being sexually harassed, both male and female, in employment. It is helping them understand their rights, but also their responsibilities. That is a project that we have trialled now with a number of educational institutions. It is just about ready to roll out.

We have also developed a relationship with MacGregor State High School and its creative arts section. We are providing scenarios of different types of discrimination and the school kids, as part of their curriculum in grade 11 and 12 in creative industries, are going to turn those scenarios into little CD or DVD scenarios that are more relevant in the way that kids would react to them. That will be happening in the next financial year and we will make those available throughout our areas.

The other thing we have done is on 1 July we launched our new website, which will give us greater capacity to engage with and have greater outreach to the Queensland community. In particular, we will be looking at developing online training, particularly for small business, because this is an area where we recognise that small business does not have a lot of resources—time resources or human resources—to understand their obligations under the act as well. So we have been consulting with the small business council and, in Townsville, we have been working with a number of small businesses that our office up there has built relationships with to try to understand what their issues are and develop resources for them.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am very interested in the Schools Project you were just talking about. Do you see that that is something that could be rolled out to more schools in the future? Will you be monitoring it?

**Mr Cocks:** It will be made available to all schools, yes, particularly through their guidance officers or their pastoral care officers. It is not part of the curriculum, but it is there as a resource for guidance officers or pastoral care officers to use with young kids. Hopefully when the DVDs are developed it will be like YouTube, so kids can do what they do through social media. They will be able to look at that and it will help them understand when they are perhaps being discriminated against, but also their responsibilities when it comes to harassment, particularly sexual harassment.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** You mentioned the Small Business Project, which is listed here on page 40 of the SDS. Could you expand a little more on that, please? You mentioned that it was in Townsville. Is it being trialled anywhere else?

**Mr Cocks:** No, that is where we are developing it. Our Townsville office had the task of developing both the education project and the Small Business Project. At the moment, we have developed a 20-questions booklet, which includes responses to tricky issues relating to our legislation that employers often face. We have developed a small business handbook. It is just being finalised and it will be going on our web at the end of next week, I am informed. Then we will do further work with the small business sector in looking at, in particular, developing online training for small businesses.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Can I ask, with the staffing, I note that there are 34 staff; is that correct?

**Mr Cocks:** Thirty-four full-time positions, yes.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** How is that roughly divided up? You probably have people going out to different community events and raising awareness. Can you update the committee?

**Mr Cocks:** We have four offices: Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and Brisbane. In each of the regional offices there are three full-time equivalent positions, but they are broken up. We have part-time admin support and trainers, complaint handlers and a manager. The admin support and the trainer are both part-timers in each of the offices. They all have a responsibility for community engagement. In Brisbane, we have a complaint handling team, which has currently four full-time employees. Then we have community relations, which has three full-time employees. Our operational component has three full-time employees or four full-time employers—five, sorry, or six full-time employees. We are moving towards our strategic direction, which is to have a mixed model, so that all our staff—the complaint handling team’s core business will be receiving complaints and trying to conciliate them, but all staff have a role in community engagement. So we have been able to extend our capacity to engage with the community, to help facilitate a greater understanding about how they can build more inclusive and fair communities.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Page 40 of the Service Delivery Statement talks about the Anti-Discrimination Commission managing complaints received under the act and delivering training to business and government and promoting public discussion. My question is: what staffing do you have at the moment?

**Mr Cocks:** There are the equivalent of 34 full-time positions, but we have two vacancies at the moment.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** When you say ‘equivalent of 34 full-time positions’, are you indicating that there are a number of part-time jobs?

**Mr Cocks:** There are some part-time jobs throughout the commission.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** What is the workload of the staff? I suppose what I am looking at is: approximately how many files would they be working on at the same time?

**Mr Cocks:** In the last financial year I think we received just over 680 complaints. Not all of those complaints were accepted. That is one core component of our work. In terms of training, we provided almost 250 training sessions last year involving approximately 3½ thousand Queenslanders.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Have the staff basically been there for some time? What I am concerned about is that there has not been a high turnover of staff. You said that you have received quite a few complaints and not all of them were accepted. I am keen to ensure that there is an understanding of the capacity to accept complaints and investigate them, not just a willingness to say, ‘We have to cut costs, cut red tape and get rid of some of these. We have not got the funding or support from the state government.’

**Mr Cocks:** No, that is not the case. If the complaints do not fit within the jurisdiction of the act, that is why they are not accepted. We have had the usual turnover in our staff, but not a high ratio. In the complaint handling team in the last 18 months there has probably been a turnover of two or three staff who had been there for a reasonable length of time. Between four and seven years, I think, has been their employment. We have a fairly stable workforce.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** The reason for the question is that some other departments have had a significant turnover of staff and there has been so much loss of knowledge. As I mentioned before lunch, the complaint and legal teams effectively have to go through and start again because the new people sitting in the positions simply do not have the knowledge. For whatever reason, the others have moved onto other jobs. What sorts of resources do you have for the ongoing training of your staff? I apologise if that has already been raised.

**Mr Cocks:** In each regional office there is one person dedicated to providing training. But that does not mean that other staff who have those skills do not also participate. In Brisbane there are two trainers in the community relations team.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** In relation to questioning your decisions, what is the appeal process that people would go through?

**Mr Cocks:** If a complaint is not accepted there is usually a conversation between the complaint handler and the complainant. They can appeal and then we go through a review process.

**CHAIR:** You mentioned the internal process. Is that something that happens often?

**Mr Cocks:** Appeals?

**CHAIR:** Yes. These are on the basis of the rejection of an application only?

**Mr Cocks:** We explain to people that it does not come under our jurisdiction and explain for what reasons. Their complaint may be referred to another jurisdiction where it would be more appropriately heard. There are a small number of those. I can get you exact numbers if you like, but there are a small number of people who appeal. Then we give our reasons and if it goes to a JR—

**CHAIR:** I do not require that information, Mr Commissioner.

**Mrs MILLER:** My question relates to age discrimination. Increasingly in my electorate older people are talking to me about the fact that they are being discriminated against in applying for positions in the workforce as well as being discriminated against in the general community. I was wondering if you could please advise the committee as to whether or not there has been an increase in complaints about age discrimination and what the commission is doing about that.

**Mr Cocks:** I do not think there has been a significant increase. I think one of the real problems with age discrimination is that it is very difficult to prove because there are a number of ways it is done. Anecdotally we hear of people concerned that they have been discriminated against based on their age. The literature shows that age discrimination is quite insidious in that it is very difficult to prove. There is a lot of unconscious bias research that demonstrates age discrimination occurs very broadly and in fact it almost suggests that if somebody is older than you then you are more likely to discriminate against them. They say it is from eight to 80. It is a quite insidious type of discrimination. As I said, it is quite often difficult to prove that you have been discriminated against because of your age because of the way things may be presented to you.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have a follow-up question. I certainly note that Woolworths and other companies are now actively employing older people in their workforce. I am wondering whether the commission has been able to actively promote that in the community. For example, in some industries it is the case that once you have turned 50 they sometimes regard you as being over the hill. In other industries, for example retail—particularly the big ones, Coles and Woolworths—they seem to be employing more older people. I am just wondering whether the message is getting out there in the community that just because you are older it does not mean that you are not able to actively contribute to the community.

**Mr Cocks:** That is a point that I will take on board. Certainly in speeches that I and other senior staff have given we have clearly identified the rationale for needing a diverse workforce, including older people. There are a number of assumptions that are based on stereotypes or mythology which are not true. Older people bring their productivity, their knowledge—all of those assets—to the workforce. When we give speeches around workforce diversity and the benefits of that, those are certainly issues. Certainly I was unaware of Woolworths and Coles doing those sorts of things. We would be only too happy to promote those types of employers if they are doing that.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have one final question. Are you working with the Human Rights Commission on its inquiry into discrimination against women in the workplace that was announced by the federal Attorney-General?

**Mr Cocks:** We will place a submission before that inquiry, yes.

**Mrs MILLER:** Do you know when that submission might be forthcoming and will you make that public?

**Mr Cocks:** Yes, all of our submissions are made public. Usually when you place a submission before an inquiry it is public. We publicise them on our website.

**Mrs MILLER:** Do you have any time frame around when that submission might be produced?

**Mr Cocks:** Not at this point, but it will be produced by the deadline.

**CHAIR:** Mr Commissioner, if I might ask you a question in relation to something which is of interest to me in the schools project. No doubt at some point in time you will need to evaluate how effective the schools project is. Are you able to indicate when that evaluation will take place? Anecdotally, could you perhaps comment on how young people are receiving the project and whether there are any discernible trends?

**Mr Cocks:** To date we have only been trialling it, and we have received very positive feedback from the participants in the trial, both educators and students. Once we make it available we will start working with Education Queensland, Catholic schools and independent schools to roll that out and we



will look at setting up an evaluation process. I suspect in another 12 months it will be a useful time to review the effectiveness of it, the usage of it and what we need to do to make it more relevant if it is a useful tool.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Ipswich West.

**Mr CHOAT:** I have a question based on a statement you made earlier about solutions to potential issues of discrimination at a community level. I suggest you are probably talking about a community based negotiation. Is that accessed by people quite easily through your office? How would a community go about getting involved in that?

**Mr Cocks:** It is usually where there might be an issue arising within the community and it is brought to our attention. If it falls within our priorities and we have the resources, we may initiate bringing the key stakeholders together within that community. We do not see it as our role to continue to lead that. We see our role as acting as a catalyst and perhaps guiding that process for a while and letting the community take control and responsibility for it. We try to act in a proactive way. Certainly where there have been issues around racism within certain communities we have taken opportunities to gather some of the stakeholders together to try to get them to start talking about those issues. But it is certainly about empowering the community to take responsibility for it.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Mr Commissioner, for attending. I understand that you can be excused.

**Mr Cocks:** Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** I call the Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Can we call the Public Trustee, please. On page 101 of the SDS in relation to the strategic direction of the Public Trustee it lists four things that the Public Trustee's services aim to provide to Queenslanders. I was wondering if you could please give the committee some more information in relation to the role of the Public Trustee for the local community.

**Mr Carne:** Could you just clarify that? You are seeking what information?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Page 101 lists four things that the Public Trustee's services aim to achieve. It mentions the financial assets of members of the community, ensuring the orderly succession of property, assisting the Queensland community by making free-of-charge enduring powers of attorney and providing members of the community with the assurance that the Public Trustee will act as their attorney. I was wondering whether you could outline some of those roles that you perform as the Public Trustee?

**Mr Carne:** Thank you for that question. That is a very important role that the Public Trustee has now been performing for some 97 years. In particular, what we are finding is that there is a greater demand for the service that comes within those four points, particularly as our population is ageing. As a consequence of that, we are finding that a significant number of our population no longer have capacity, and it is in that area that the Public Trustee services are exceedingly in demand.

What we are finding is that our appointment as a financial administrator has become our most significant role. Traditionally the role had been that of an administrator of deceased estates. That has now been surpassed by our role as a financial administrator. So we are getting appointed in a significant number of matters as a financial administrator usually for elderly people who do not have capacity and we are appointed solely to handle their financial affairs. The Adult Guardian, of course, is appointed to handle their personal affairs.

We are appointed in a situation where there is nobody else who wishes to do that role, say a family member, or nobody else who is able to do that role or where there has been conflict. Normally that happens where a family member has had an enduring power of attorney and it has been found after a hearing before QCAT or a court that that family member has abused that power of attorney and stolen the funds of usually a parent. The Public Trustee is appointed in a very difficult situation to take over the finances of that elderly person. We usually find in that situation that the money is all gone. We then have to prepare a budget and then handle the payment of their rent or accommodation or medical expenses et cetera and then embark on a difficult legal process to try to recover the funds that have been stolen. That has become a significant role for the Public Trustee, and that is covered in that first dot point on page 101.

As I have mentioned, the second dot point is the role that we perform where somebody has died with a will or more often without a will. Usually when somebody has died intestate—that means without a will—we have been asked to step in and if there are assets that need to be administered

then the Public Trustee performs that role. Once again, this is a very demanding role. What we are finding, of course, is that unfortunately there is growing conflict within family units and that has come about as a result of restructured families. There are situations I am finding where people have been in several marriages and there are children from various marriages. So we are finding that there is a lot of conflict now over assets of a deceased estate.

Unfortunately the Public Trustee gets caught in the middle of that in the role of the executor or often in the situation where we have been acting for a child who does not have capacity, and we have about 8,000 of those clients. A significant number of those are young people who have not got capacity because of birth defect and we have had to handle their financial affairs. Often we are finding that a parent does not leave them anything in their estate with the misapprehension that one of the other family members—one of the other children, the siblings—will look after that sibling or with the attitude that the state will look after that sibling. So our role then, under the Succession Act, is to apply to the court for what we call proper provision for that client. So we have a lot of those cases as well. So that is a significant area that we perform in.

As you would be aware, the Public Trustee is unusual as a government agency in that we are totally self-funded. So in those cases where the clients can afford to pay then we are fee-for-service, similar to what lawyers are. So we charge those costs, and those costs, as you also would be aware, are gazetted and tabled in the parliament. So that is a very significant role we perform and it is a traditional part of our role. Unfortunately, as I mentioned, what we are finding is a growing conflict situation. We are not alone; lawyers are finding that as well, as the chair would be aware. So that is a significant part of the role that we perform.

In regard to making wills free of charge, that has traditionally been the role of the Public Trust Office. You would be aware that the Public Trustee was set up in January 1916 by the TJ Ryan government solely for the purpose then to do free wills for servicemen who were going overseas, and we still hold wills of those servicemen where our trust officers in January 1916 went down to the wharves with the departing troop ships or out to the RNA showgrounds where they were bivouacked and did free wills for those servicemen. We have continued in that role and we are the only Public Trustee in this country that does do free wills. As a result, we did some 24,000 free wills last year. Our nearest Public Trust Office would be New South Wales and they do in the order of about 9,000 wills because they charge if it is that they are not appointed as the executive.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** So that was 20,000, was it?

**Mr Carne:** 24,000.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Is that higher than last year?

**Mr Carne:** We do 24,000 free wills whether we are appointed executor or not. So it is a significant service that we provide to the people of Queensland. It is interesting that there is research being done by the University of Queensland in regard to intestacy throughout Australia, and one of the original findings—and we are in the early stages of that research by the university—is that Queensland has a lower intestacy rate than other states. They seem to believe—and they are still looking through that—that that came about as a result of the work that the Public Trustee has done over some 97 years of doing free wills. We actually have at our Brendale will bank some 980,000 wills which we hold on behalf of Queenslanders. So that is a very significant role that we play for Queenslanders, and that is part of our CSOs that we contribute back to Queenslanders. It is in the order of \$4 million or thereabouts that we incur by way of a cost to us to deliver that free service to Queenslanders.

The last dot point is 'provide members of the community with the assurance that the Public Trustee will act as their attorney'. Once again, we can perform that if Queenslanders do not have anybody that has either the capacity or the willingness to be their attorney. It can be a very onerous task legally to perform that role and the Public Trustee can perform that service, and we do for a number of our clients.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you very much. Can I ask a further question? How many staff are there currently at the Public Trustee?

**Mr Carne:** If I can just turn to the relevant document that I have here because it is a very important question in regard to the way we deliver our front-line services. In regard to our staffing—I just want to be correct on the number—we currently have 553 full-time equivalents, and that is up to 30 June this year. We are anticipating that that will rise to 558 during 2013-14, and that is as a result of our increase in front-line service delivery.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It sounds like you do an amazing job there, especially in providing 24,000 free wills each year. I think the member for Bundamba may have some follow-up questions.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, I do. Will the Public Trustee provide an outline of the trends regarding workloads in his office? I am asking about areas where the workload is going up and also decreasing. Could you provide us some information on that?

**Mr Carne:** Very well. Perhaps if I can premise that by giving you a brief overview of the work that the Public Trust Office does. It is surprising that a lot of people are not aware of the broad ambit of the role of the Public Trust Office. As I mentioned in my response to the previous question, clearly we do administration of deceased estates. So, of my 553 staff, there would be in the order of some 360 who are trust officers. We operate out of 16 offices throughout Queensland from Cairns to Mount Isa and all the way down the coast to Ipswich and Redcliffe and down to Southport. As I said, 360 of those would be trust officers. They operate out of our 16 offices. They do the traditional work whether in regard to the administration of deceased estates or whether in regard to the financial administration of clients who do not have capacity.

What we are finding in some of our areas is that we are challenged in getting competent staff. There is turnover of staff. As you appreciate, to have trust officers do what can be complex quasi-legal work, training is very important for us. So we put a lot of training in. As a result we produce very skilled and very well-trained trust officers who then get snaffled by other government agencies. So that is an ongoing challenge for us as to how we can maintain the delivery of that expert service.

So in regard to our deceased estates and financial administration we have set up projects—what we call client service centres—and those are in areas where we do not have high client contact. For instance, we have in the order of some 5,000 clients who are minors. These are children under the age of 18 who have normally been awarded damages for, say, a motor vehicle accident and until such time as they come of age at 18 then they need an administrator or the trustee to handle those funds. So we have some 5,000 of those clients who we act for. Our only contact will be with a parent who requires funds to buy, say, a laptop or a bicycle or to go on a holiday or for education et cetera and we are required to process those requests, and we set KPIs as to how quickly we must deal with those.

We have found that it is more efficient for us to centralise that service, and that achieves two things. It means that we can have a point of contact, because the other problem I have is with staff turnover and staff being on holidays and the complaint, 'I can never speak to the same person.' In order to address that we have now centralised, as I mentioned in this case, minors' trusts and we have moved those into our Redcliffe office. We have moved the 5,000 files into that office and we have set up a team where we have one person across the top who is the point of contact and those underneath who do the leg work on the files. We have found that that is also a very good way of training those young trust officers in understanding a file and working a file. So we have now rolled out that in regard to minors.

We have also rolled it out in the Brisbane office in regard to those of our clients who are in institutions, say, in hospitals or in aged-care facilities. We are also now rolling it out at Ipswich for those in shared accommodation. We have a large number of clients—and they tend to be centralised in the Ipswich area—who have intellectual disabilities. We care for them in shared accommodation. We are finding that we are able to deliver a much better service there. So that is one way we have addressed, first of all, the demand in regard to our services and our staffing and the training.

We also have a very large legal team. Getting good competent lawyers to work in what is a very stressful environment because of the pressures of legal work—we have in the order of some 40-odd or thereabouts lawyers who handle that legal work—is an ongoing pressure for us.

What we have also done is we have what is called a property division. So we have a large number of our clients' properties that we have to maintain and look after. We have now outsourced a lot of that sort of work. So we have just gone through a whole process of outsourcing work, such as doing maintenance on those properties and valuations of those properties, throughout the whole of Queensland to streamline that and get a better cost base for that, because we can do volume with those who have been successful in the tendering process we have completed.

We were doing motor vehicle auctions and that now has been outsourced. As a result, that work has reduced and I am now dealing with a surplus of three staff or thereabouts who have come out of that and they will be absorbed within the organisation. That is a further demand in regard to our staffing.

The major area, of course, though is in regard to our front-line service delivery, which are those 360-odd staff throughout our 16 offices. What we are looking at is how we can train and deliver that service, and the CSCs is one model we are working on to ensure that that happens.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I have a follow-up question. You spoke about teamwork. When you are acting for a client, I thought the situation was that there would be one person working on the file and that that one person knew the file. But are you indicating that there is a whole team working on these individual files so that when someone moves on or gets transferred there is that knowledge? Then the follow-up question is about costing. How do you determine the fee for managing that file when you may have to have more people familiarising themselves with the file and more time is required—it is not just one person dealing with one file?

**Mr Carne:** Perhaps if I can take you that through step by step because that is fairly complex and it is a broad-ranging question, Mr Wellington. First of all, I am not losing that knowledge. As the CEO of the organisation, I am confronted by the fact that I have staff turnover for whatever reason. I am challenged with an ageing staff. That is one of my major problems at the moment. I have staff who have been there for 30 to 40 years. Unfortunately the X and Y generation are not that like that. We are not going to see that sort of commitment to one place of employment. So with my X and Y generation I am tending to have significant turnover, and my challenge is how I ensure that service delivery. And you are right: you need to have knowledge of the matter.

So I will first of all deal with the aspect of work which is the financial administration—that is, as I said, where we have been appointed to handle the financial affairs of a client who does not have capacity. The Public Trust Office has a very sophisticated and very advanced internal management system—a computer system, a software package—that assists trust officers in the tasks that they are required to do. Each trust officer would have, depending on the complexity of the files, ranging from 50 or thereabouts up to 80 files—so the less complex, the greater number of files to assist. So for that trust officer each day the tasks come up on the screen—'Pay Mr Wellington's rates'; 'Pay Mr Carne's hospital accommodation'—and that trust officer then has to carry out that work. As I said, that is in regard to those areas of work where there is not intensive client contact.

We also have a large number of clients who do not have capacity, and we are getting appointed in a lot of matters now where clients do not have capacity for drug or alcohol issues. So they are not elderly people. They tend to be younger people. They tend to be very street smart and they do not like the fact that the Public Trustee collects their pension and pays their rent and their food and their accommodation. They would much rather take control of that.

We find that we have far more contact with those clients because they are always on the phone saying, 'I need another \$30 for cigarettes, presents et cetera,' and we have to process that. In that situation we are finding that, if you have a team working across the top, you can better administer the file. Because in a file, as with a legal file, you have documents to put on it. Rather than having a senior AO5 or AO6 person doing that, having somebody at an AO2 or AO3 level handle the day-to-day operations is much more efficient. To handle the decision-making process and understand the protocols, you have a much senior person. That works much more efficiently.

So far as the cost that the Public Trustee charges, once again that depends on the area of work we are in. Our fees, as I said before, are similar to those of a legal office. It is piecework. So we calculate how much it costs to do that area of work over that period of time, and that is based upon the number of assets and the number of contacts you expect. We categorise the file, as I said before, based on complexity. The higher the complexity, the higher the demand and then obviously the higher the fee. There is no 'we seek not to charge a fee' because somebody then has to get familiar with a file. That is why we are looking for systems where you have senior people across the top with other people doing what I call lesser work. The very effective use of technology takes away that labour intensity, so there is not that loss of knowledge of the matter because it is captured within the system itself.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I have two follow-on questions. How do you actually cost a file to send an account to a client? Is it the case that you are effectively a business arm of the government in that you are making money for the government?

**CHAIR:** I might add a question also. Are you task based or time based in your billing?

**Mr Carne:** It is piecework so it is task based. I will go to the paper in regard to fees and charges, because this is obviously a topical issue. Your question was: are we a financial arm of the government to make money for the government?

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Well, you are self-funded. In the SDS it says that you maintained your self-funding status through delivery of a strong financial performance. I have not checked the financial figures, but are you sending a return back to the government? Are you an income-making business?

**Mr Carne:** No, we are here to help the government. To that end, we are here to make sure we are not a financial burden on the government. In regard to the current financial year, we have had a good financial year. A significant part of our work is what we call funds management. We manage several billion dollars of clients' funds. That is a very challenging role, particularly during the GFC, which is a good example. We, like every other trust company or financial organisation, were very hard hit by that, because we depend on that income to help us meet the major costs of service delivery.

So far as the government is concerned, the big benefit is that our CSOs—which are significant; they are in the order of some \$27 million for the financial year just ended—would be a cost on government if we did not absorb them. If we were not absorbing that, it would be met by government itself. I spoke earlier about the free will service, for instance. Education is a major CSO. We fund Legal Aid to some extent. We fund the Adult Guardian's office to some extent. As a government agency we assist and we also ensure that we do not make a demand on consolidated revenue.

My challenge as the CEO is to ensure that my commercial operations are sufficient to meet the growing demands of my CSOs. The difficulty I have as a CEO is that I cannot contain my major overhead, which is growing at the rate of 12 to 15 per cent. It really grows as a consequence of us being appointed as the financial administrator of clients who do not have the capacity to pay those fees. Unfortunately, that is a growing demand on us. What we are finding is that a significant number of the clients to whom we get appointed to handle their financial affairs do not have the financial capacity. Their only source of income is their pension; they have no other assets. A significant percentage of our clients—in excess of 70 per cent of our clients or thereabouts—have less than \$20,000 to their name, which is a very small amount of money. To get back to your question about fees, if you wish I can go through that in some detail because that is an issue that is often asked of us. As I mentioned—

**CHAIR:** Provided you do not do it item by item.

**Mr Carne:** I will not. With all due respect, Chair, you come from a legal background. You know how tedious it can be when a client asks about fees item by item. What I will give you is a broad overview, if I may. The first thing that is a sense of reassurance is that our fees are gazetted. That is, they are laid in the parliament and they are reviewed by the parliament. The unusual aspect of the Public Trust Office, unlike every other Public Trustee in this country—except for Western Australia, which was only three or four years ago—is that we are fee for service, as I mentioned before. Every other trust company is commission based. In 2001 the Public Trustee in Queensland—the first Public Trust Office—decided that it was not a transparent process to charge fees. Why should somebody pay five per cent of their assets if I do the work or not, because it is not based on the amount of labour you do or the service you deliver; it is based upon five per cent of your capital portfolio?

What we were finding during that period in the late nineties and early 2000s is that, because people's capital assets were building—the value of their houses and their share portfolios—it was a very lazy way to make income but it was not a true, transparent way to make income. So we converted to fee for service, and that was done in 2001. Since then the fee for service has only increased by CPI. We review our fees on an annual basis to make sure they are appropriate, and we table those in the parliament.

Those fees, as I have said, are based on that piecework. It is similar to a lawyer saying, 'For me to do your estate, based upon the fact you have a house, shares and two bank accounts and there are five beneficiaries, the cost will be in this order.' So it is worked on that basis. It is a very complex process which is detailed step by step in our fees which are tabled in the parliament and published in the *Government Gazette*.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I have a follow-on question. In relation to the skill set of staff in the Public Trust Office, you mentioned there is a reasonably high turnover of staff. I think that is accurate. What sort of ongoing training is available? I am thinking out loud. Are we talking about solicitors? Are we talking about accountants? With the movement in the new work that is taking up a lot of your time, is there a need for more funding to be allocated to provide better training or more in-house training?

**Mr Carne:** Most certainly my most valuable asset is my people. We have invested tremendously in our people. You will see in your question about the SDS that we are putting money back into our organisation because we believe it is a very important investment to make, both in our people and in our capacity to deliver that front-line service. One of the big challenges we have had, as I mentioned before, is how we can continue to meet those KPIs with a quick turnaround in a decision for our clients. I spoke before about our CSCs, our client service centre delivery service.

The other area is how we can do outreach services. We are using technology. We are going through courthouses and Centrelink offices to expand our service with the use of laptops and printers. So my document makers are able to visit. We have a very extensive outreach centre, so we are not just held to our 16 geographical locations which we have inherited over some 50 or 60 years. That is another major way of delivering services. But you are correct: investing in our people is the most important thing we do. We put a lot of money into our training. We have used technology. We have an online system of training now, because training can be expensive. My HR people are working very closely to look at how we can be very effective. We are doing an online service. We are developing modules now in-house.

I also have my people working to understand about leadership. One of the big challenges I have is that I have a lot of people with the title 'manager', and they have that title simply because of years of service and not necessarily because of their skill as a manager. So I am now making sure my managers know how to manage. I am putting a lot of money into leadership development for my senior people. I am also looking at performance planning review. That is something we rolled out three years ago, and we are now going through that process. My staff and my managers are getting used to the fact that they have to work with their staff and the staff have to meet their deliveries. We have to meet what they are looking for out of the organisation as well.

When I spoke before about the churn rate, post GFC things changed dramatically. Prior to the GFC there was a significant churn rate. People are now very conscious of how important a job is, but at the same time my people are well trained and are very attractive to other government departments. I have invested in my people and have ensured they can see a sense of progression in the organisation. To that end I have rolled out a workforce plan. I have now filled my positions. I had a very high proportion of people acting up in positions, not owning the positions. I have now completed a process in my organisation where people have been appointed to positions. I believe that process, along with training, PP&D and permanent appointments to positions, will overcome the stress that comes from the churn rate.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I have a follow-on question. Before lunch I asked the Attorney-General questions about the various locations of your trust offices. One is in Nambour, at Currie Street. I thank you very much for maintaining it. Only last night I attended a meeting in Currie Street, Nambour about a range of matters, and we are very appreciative of that continued presence. Are there any plans for more regional offices? I know we are talking about the bigger centres and doing things on the internet, but do you have any plans for new smaller regional offices, where people can walk in off the street and have one-on-one contact, which I think many people look for today instead of doing it over the internet?

**Mr Carne:** Mr Wellington, that is a good question. It is one that you and I have had discussions about, particularly service delivery in the Nambour office. The Public Trust Office has done a lot of work over the last three years in working with the state government demographer to get an understanding of where our client base is growing. Our client base is those who are 65-plus. I am constrained by the fact that I have some 16 offices. Back in the 1970s or thereabouts my predecessor went out and bought buildings. What I am finding now is that I need to be able to move to where the demand is. We have done a lot of work to understand where that growing demand is going to be. As you would appreciate, the big challenge for my office, policymakers within the parliament and the delivery of services in this state will be what I call the ageing tsunami that is going to sweep across the top of us over the next 20 years. We are not well resourced to meet that.

Part of that has come out of our understanding of where our client base is growing—that is, the 65-plus age group. As you would appreciate, Queensland has a very high percentage of ageing population because they come up here to retire. Clearly, it is on the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast but it is in other areas as well such as Cleveland, which we were surprised about. So we have a better understanding of where our demand is going to be. Buying a physical location is very capital expensive. We need to be able to meet that demand, and that is why we are looking at the use of technology. Our outreach services through other government agencies are very effective, because most people want to see us to get a will made or an enduring power of attorney.

The other thing we are looking at is how we can centralise our offices and then provide what we call a front office and back office type arrangement. So we are looking at all those models at the moment. As you are aware, the Nambour office has been there since about 1998. We worked with you on that. We have recently renewed that lease for another year. We are conscious that there is a huge amount of development being done with the shopping centres in Nambour just around from where our office is. There has been some money spent on that. However, as the Attorney would be aware, we put a significant investment in our Sunshine Coast office in his electorate some three or four years ago because we saw that as a growing need. We identified where the railway was going to be put in, where the hospital was going to be put in and we identified that would be a huge demand for our client base. That is why we positioned an office there, to meet what we see as a growing demand.

We are aware that we have to look cleverly at how we can deliver that service and make sure that we do not overcapitalise and waste money and make a wrong decision. We are continually looking at both location and service. At the moment we put our toe in the water through our outreach service to see how things are growing. We keep a regular check on the work through various offices and we do notice trends where some offices increase in work and some offices decrease in work. We have to compensate for that because there is a bottom-line cost in regard to service delivery. As I said, it is a very expensive way to deliver the service. But, yes, we are looking all the time at where our service is needed. As that service gets greater, we will then be looking at—I am against buying property because I believe it constrains your ability to move as the situation changes. For instance, we lease the Sunshine Coast office. That is the way we are going to move forward. But we are continually looking at that, and it is a matter of where the demand is and how we best meet that demand with our service delivery.

**CHAIR:** I have a follow-up question. You mentioned free wills. My questions will come in a series, but I need you to follow where my argument is leaning. Is there a means test on free wills?

**Mr Carne:** Chair, you and I go back a long way in regard to will making and that delivery of service. In regard to a means test, no, there is not a means test. It is provided, as I said, to all Queenslanders whatever their financial situation might be and whether we are appointed as the executor of their estate or not. There are some situations where we have clients who have very complex structures. Sometimes we have to work with them to get them to understand that it would be better if a lawyer did their will.

**CHAIR:** That was the next part of my question.

**Mr Carne:** I understood that. I know you well and I could see where you were going.

**CHAIR:** As a past president of the Law Society you know that—

**Mrs MILLER:** And a very impressive one.

**CHAIR:** Indeed.

**Mr Carne:** I was your CEO.

**CHAIR:** You know that in Queensland the profession of solicitors, or lawyers as we now call them, is a very decentralised one. Seventy per cent would probably work in a practice with four partners or fewer. Of course the Public Trustee competes against those lawyers who might be a single practitioner in Longreach or Nambour perhaps. They actually compete against each other, don't they? You provide a complementary service to the local solicitor in the local town.

**Mr Carne:** Sorry, are you saying we compete with regard to doing wills?

**CHAIR:** That is competition to me. If the Public Trustee is doing a will and the solicitor two doors up is doing a will, that is competing, is it not, except in the case where there is a free will and the lawyer charges for one. It is competition, isn't it?

**Mr Carne:** If you are talking about pricing—

**CHAIR:** Competition on service.

**Mr Carne:** No, it is not. The government has determined that it is important for all Queenslanders to have the opportunity to have a will. Queenslanders have the choice to go to their local lawyer or to go, in this case, to the Public Trustee Office. It has been shown that the cost to the community, to the government and to the courts of a Queenslanders not having a will is quite significant.

**CHAIR:** That still applies to Queensland solicitors, though, doesn't it?

**Mr Carne:** Sorry?

**CHAIR:** That still applies to Queensland solicitors, whether they go to a Queensland solicitor in private practice or to the Public Trustee?

**Mr Carne:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** They both save that court process by having a will.

**Mr Carne:** Yes, and many solicitors do free wills. When I was in practice, on a lot of occasions I did free wills. We are not in competition with the legal profession. We are seeking to complement what the legal profession is doing, and it is a very important role that the legal profession performs in Queensland. I have said both to you and to many of the Queensland Law Society presidents that we are not there to compete with solicitors in Queensland. The area in which we work is a very large area and you will find that people do not make a choice. To be honest with you, why would you go and get a free will done—and that is one of the difficulties I have because people think less of something that is free. I think it is a good, quality product, but at the same time why would I compete with a solicitor with regard to a product based on cost, because it is such an important document, whether it is my will or my enduring power of attorney?

**CHAIR:** I understand all that.

**Mr Carne:** You will find that most Queenslanders either have a relationship with a solicitor or know somebody who does and they will get a referral to that solicitor. As I have said to many presidents of the Law Society in the past and the current one just recently, when you look at the clients we do service, a lot of them—and I have to be careful in the way I phrase this—are challenged in terms of their ability to access the services. They find it easier to go to the local Public Trustee Office because their family is used to dealing with government agencies. We are not really competing for the same group, I would say. When you look at the estates that we end up getting, they are very small estates. The area that the solicitors of Queensland work in is a different area, with a more sophisticated client base; they are looking for a very professional relationship and to that end they pay for it. That is something I support.

**CHAIR:** All I was really leading to was that when you are looking for an area to service, do you take into account the local legal services?

**Mr Carne:** The local legal services?

**CHAIR:** Is that something you do or is that something that is simply not relevant to whether or not you establish a centre in a provincial town?

**Mr Carne:** One of the big challenges all of us have—and it was the same when I was the president of the Law Society and the CEO of the Law Society—is the difficulty of finding lawyers to deliver services, particularly into a lot of the regional areas. That is where government has been asked to step in. That is where that outreach service is so important. So far as whether we look at the lawyers who are there, it is relevant to take that into consideration. My job is really to assist government in delivering what is, as I said before, a very important service. Yes, we work with other providers, and that of course is the legal profession.

**CHAIR:** I only mention this on the basis that a sole practitioner in a provincial town would pay rent and wages and would not be subsidised across other areas. For instance, sole practitioners—

**Mr Carne:** And that is a very valid point—

**CHAIR:** If I might go on, it seems to me—and I hope I am not looking at it too simplistically—that there are, as you say, estates being administered and injured people whose investment interest funds are used to effectively subsidise the free wills? Isn't that effectively what happens?

**Mr Carne:** We can step through that as it is a very broad question. First of all, as you would appreciate from my background both as a practitioner for some 35 years and as a former president of the Queensland Law Society and CEO of the Queensland Law Society, I am very committed to the



very important role that solicitors deliver in Queensland. To that end solicitors I know do not look to make a living out of charging for wills. That is certainly not the work they do. As I mentioned before, we do not seek to be appointed the executor. We simply provide a facility so that people can have a simple will and an enduring power of attorney drawn up. In the case of most people, we find that when their family member passes away, they go to their local solicitor to administer the estate. That is where solicitors are seeking to grow their practice and that is where they do very good work, and we do not seek to compete with that. But, yes, we do not charge for wills. It is a service that the government, over some 97 years, has sought from the Public Trustee Office to do. I am at the order of my minister, the Attorney-General. If he believes that that is not an important service and it is best left to solicitors to do, then most certainly I will back off from that. Your question then was regarding whether the funds that we have then supplement or enable us to deliver that service and, therefore, that is not true competition—

**CHAIR:** I was not relating it so much to true competition. It is the case that private industry does not receive the same benefits of having something else in their practice subsidising free wills, for instance. They do not have myriad client money to assist them in paying other outlays in order to be able to provide free wills.

**Mr Carne:** Most certainly, yes.

**CHAIR:** That is all.

**Mrs MILLER:** I was interested in your comments in relation to the Public Trustee managing property. I note that the Public Trustee manages the houses in Collingwood Park affected by subsidence on behalf of the department of mines. Can you give us an outline of what is involved in managing these properties throughout the state and how many properties you might manage?

**Mr Carne:** I referred to the fact that when we administer estates we have assets, usually properties. During the time of administration we handle those properties, whether it is to rent them out, to pay the rates and then to sell them so the estate can be wound up. They are the properties I was referring to. You mentioned something at Collingwood Park?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes. I understand that the department of mines has purchased a number of properties at Collingwood Park and the department of mines basically asked the Public Trustee to manage them on behalf of the department of mines. If you could get some more information about that I would be very grateful as to whether or not that is the case.

**Mr Carne:** Yes, certainly. I will take that on notice. I thought I would have been aware of that. I am not aware of that, but I will certainly have that looked into.

**Mrs MILLER:** I thank you very much for that. I have another question in relation to your involvement in providing information at National Seniors functions, the Ekka and other places around Queensland. It is highly appreciated by people in our community. I wonder whether Public Trustee officers also visit schools? My concern relates to particularly grade 12 students who are ready to go out into the workforce and move on in their lives. A lot of them really do not know a lot about their legal obligations. I am asking whether or not Public Trustee officers go into schools, particularly around year 11 and 12 time.

**Mr Carne:** That is a very good question. No, we do not. It is a very important role that the Queensland Law Society performs. Whenever the Queensland Law Society approaches us for assistance we certainly do support that. But, no, we do not have a program where we go into schools.

**Mrs MILLER:** Could you think about it?

**Mr Carne:** I certainly will.

**CHAIR:** Mr Attorney, as I understand, the Public Trustee is prepared to take a question on notice in relation to the administration of the Public Trustee in respect of mining tenements, as I understand it?

**Mrs MILLER:** No, it was in relation to the houses that the department of mines purchased in Collingwood Park.

**CHAIR:** Are you happy for that to be a question—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The Public Trustee made the point that he did not know whether that was in fact the case. So the Public Trustee will get back to us.

**CHAIR:** Is that something you intend to do?

**Mr Carne:** I certainly will.

**CHAIR:** I understand the director-general may have been asked on two occasions to supply an answer to a question on notice. Are you happy, Mr Attorney, to accept those as being questions on notice?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for that. Mr Public Trustee, thank you very much for giving us your time and for your words. We wish you on your speedy way.

**Mr Carne:** It was a pleasure, Chair. Thank you.

**Mr WATTS:** Attorney-General, you spoke earlier about making Queensland the safest place in Australia in which to raise a child. Can you outline some of the steps that have been taken to affect that for the government, particularly in relation to synthetic drugs, child grooming and some of those areas?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for the question. There are a few things. Immediately on coming to government we set up the Carmody commission of inquiry, and we have now seen the results and the government will respond to that accordingly. Basically, that commission looked at the child protection system and how we can gain efficiencies but it also was about ensuring, as Commissioner Carmody has said, that we do not experience the expected spike of 30 per cent in the next 10 to 15 years because there will be too much pressure on the system. The commission of inquiry came up with some great recommendations that the government is considering.

The other things we have done include one of the bills that I introduced in the parliament of which I am immensely proud, which is the two strikes policy for child sex offenders. This is the first and toughest law in the nation with respect to two strikes for paedophiles. Essentially, it means that if a child sex offender is convicted of a crime that carries a sentence of life imprisonment and they are then convicted on a second occasion, they will receive mandatory life imprisonment with a non-parole period of 20 years. It is a two-strike policy. I note the support of Bravehearts. Like other organisations, the Daniel Morcombe Foundation is very supportive of those types of laws as well.

Synthetic drugs are a scourge on our community. The issue we had to tackle recently in the parliament was the fact that when synthetic drugs are manufactured, the chemicals keep changing. Currently, I am required to update and add banned drugs to the Drugs Misuse Regulation. The problem is that, once we find out about a drug and we go through the process of putting it on the banned substances list, the manufacturer then changes the chemical structure and it then would not be the same drug. Then it would go straight onto the market. Recently we brought amendments into the parliament which essentially say that, if a drug is intended to have the same pharmacological effect as a normal substance would, it will fall into one of the two categories. The same applies if it is of a similar or substantially similar chemical structure. There are a couple of limbs that have to be satisfied now. That is very much about ensuring we can nip these issues in the bud rather than going through the process of adding substances to the banned substances list. Instead, we can do that at the outset. I suspect that once the legislation really kicks off, the police will be able to utilise it as a tool and a mechanism that they have not had before. They now have access to it.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I have a few questions for the Attorney-General. I refer to SDS, page 3, 'restore accountability in government'. I was just wondering if you can recall whether you had any meetings with Echo or Collection House in May.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I cannot recall, no. But I would make the point that you can go online and get my diary and have a look yourself.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Actually, I am glad you mentioned that, because I have here your diary, which was tabled yesterday as part of the estimates hearing. There does not appear to be any entry there that you did meet with either Echo or Collection House, but what I am concerned about—and I am happy if you want to take this on notice or seek further clarification—is that I have gone now to the Queensland Integrity Commissioner, where the lobbyists actually log who they have met with. It may be their oversight, so I need some clarification, but it says here very clearly that on 9 May 2013 Collection House met with the Attorney-General.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** As I said, I cannot recall. I cannot even recall what Collection House do. I know what Echo does; they have a casino.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** You do not recall meeting with—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, I do not—not at all. But it may be—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It could be your office. I am just trying to seek clarification.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am happy to clarify it, but there are many social functions that we may go to where lobbyists, through this new code of conduct, may put that they saw me or met with me, and our diary may not have had an official meeting because it might be a social situation. But I am happy to clarify that and provide details at a later date.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Just to clarify for the committee, I have 9 May here: Echo Entertainment, and the name of the government or opposition representative was the Attorney-General. Then again on 9 May, Collection House; and then on 30 May, Collection House, the Attorney-General. It is not 'Office of the Attorney-General', so I am assuming it could be you. I am happy to seek clarification, and I am happy to seek leave to table those. Also, I have gone through these dates here—

**CHAIR:** Granted.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** My follow-up question to the Attorney-General is: I do have a copy of your diary here, and there is no matching detail that contact with the lobbyist was actually made in your diary. That has already been tabled at a previous estimates hearing, but I am happy for the Attorney to get back to us. Or is he happy to take it on notice?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Of course, yes.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Can we please call the CEO of Legal Aid.

**Mrs MILLER:** My questions are for the CEO. I refer to the summary of portfolio budgets, which is the first table in the SDS. It lists the estimate of the budget for Legal Aid Queensland for 2012-13 as being \$125,922,000 with an estimated actual spending of \$123,101,000. Can you explain that drop in funding for us, please?

**Mr Reilly:** The amounts \$125,922,000 and \$123,101,000 are in the expenses side of the budget. Income is up at the top. In terms of funding, the more relevant figures are \$125,922,000, which grew to \$127,069,000. In terms of expenditure, \$125,922,000 was budgeted; the estimated actual was \$123,101,000. That is why there was a surplus.

**Mrs MILLER:** On page 54 of the SDS I note a list of initiatives to be started or completed by Legal Aid Queensland this financial year. Can you go through some of those initiatives, please, and advise us in relation to how you are going to complete these initiatives if you have a reduced budget allocation in terms of staffing et cetera?

**Mr Reilly:** In terms of the staffing allocation, the numbers of FTE that we have currently is 437. That is our estimated actual for 2012-13. Our estimate at the time of writing the Service Delivery Statement for 2013-14 is 431. That decline is due to a number of large projects ending during the 2012-13 financial year, so there was no need to continue those jobs. That was part of a planned approach. When I end projects, people leave because they are temporary positions.

In terms of the dot point at the bottom of the page, 'continue to provide quality front-line legal services', that is our core business. I can take you through those in detail if you wish.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, please.

**Mr Reilly:** Legal Aid Queensland is very diverse organisation which provides a range of free legal services across the whole spectrum, from early intervention services such as community legal education, information and advice, through to lawyer assisted dispute resolution, duty lawyer services in family courts and criminal courts, large and complex criminal trials, family trials, DV hearings and so on, all the way through to appeals to the High Court. So it is a very diverse and interesting organisation.

The outputs that we plan to achieve in 2013-14 will be at the same level or higher, we hope, than they were in the past year, so there is no reduction of services next year. In fact, due to some increased Commonwealth funding that was announced a few months ago we are able to increase some of the services that we will be providing in Commonwealth areas of law, including family law and civil law, areas such as consumer law, employment law and so on. That is very exciting. Is that enough about providing quality front-line legal services? I have hundreds of numbers, but I can spare you them if you wish.

In relation to increased fees to private lawyers for family law grants of aid by five per cent, we have not increased our fees for private lawyers for family law grants of aid since 2004. Legal Aid Queensland has a really good mixed service delivery model: 80 per cent of legal representation

services are provided by private lawyers. I am very proud of that. We have the highest usage of private lawyers—at least the last time I looked—of any legal aid commission in the country. We enjoy a good working partnership with those lawyers.

One of the things I have been worried about in the past few years is the need to keep making sure private lawyers are able to keep doing the work we ask them to do at the rates that we pay them. It has been really nice this year to be able to increase fees for family lawyers in the family law area by five per cent. It is the third or fourth increase we have been able to introduce over the past 12 months. Last year we introduced a 10 per cent fee increase in the area of domestic violence law and also increased the cap that lawyers could claim from us by a significant amount. That was part of an overhaul of our approach to domestic violence grants of aid.

We also increased the hourly rate that we pay to duty lawyers in criminal law matters from \$110 to \$120 an hour. That was in recognition of the really important work that private lawyers do for us in looking after duty lawyer services across Queensland. That is a service that we provide that not only helps provide access to justice for Queenslanders but also is actually integral to the effective functioning of the court system. The courts could not do without it.

Then the other fee increase we have had is an increase in our fees for advices. Sometimes we cannot provide advice in-house because we have a conflict, so we have increased the advice fees for private lawyers as well. This is the latest of a series of fee increases that we have been able to introduce over the past 12 months. It will hopefully keep a few of those very good private lawyers who do legal aid work on the books, because we cannot get by without them.

We move into projects then. The first project is redeveloping the Legal Aid Queensland website to improve accessibility for clients, lawyers and the community. I have an amazing statistic here: our website gets over a million hits a year. I have a number here which is not actually just website hits; it is other things we do as well. It is a very well utilised website, and it has a host of information for the community about legal issues. It also houses all of the information for lawyers who do legal aid work to help them understand what is going on at Legal Aid, and so on. One of the systems that we have there, Grants Online, is a bit ageing and we think we can do better for the lawyers and have something more contemporary and useful. What we are doing is upgrading our website. One of the concerns we have about it at the moment is that it is not fully disability accessible, so we need to clean it up and improve it.

That is funded from within our normal core funding. It is a project that we have planned for and allocated a budget towards. We have a project manager who is a staff member. At Legal Aid, just as we contract out a lot of our work to private lawyers, we bring in a lot of outsiders to help us with our projects as well. It helps really revitalise the place and bring in the best knowledge that is out there into the organisation. That is funded from within core funding.

In terms of expanding our referral pathways for advice programs through Toowoomba, I am pleased to say that that has actually happened. I was in Toowoomba a few weeks ago, and I had a great meeting with a bunch of NGOs up there. That is a really good program. We have a state-wide call centre which provides legal information and referral services to tens of thousands of Queenslanders every year. You are always welcome to ring us between 9 and 5 every day. But many clients are more vulnerable than others, and there are also some priority areas where we really need to make sure we are out there for the clients, if you like, more than just sitting back in a call centre.

The referral pathway links to non-government organisations that provide services to particularly vulnerable clients. It originated in the domestic violence space. We make sure that when those community organisations have a client who is in that situation they can get straight through to a really experienced lawyer in Legal Aid rather than having to come through the call centre. It is now in Brisbane, Ipswich, the Gold Coast and Toowoomba. We are hoping we can expand it to another regional area during the course of the coming financial year. So Toowoomba has been rolled out, and I hope it is going to go well.

I refer to the item 'implement the IT support capability review's recommendations'. Like any large organisation, we are very dependent upon a sophisticated IT system. We have 13 regional offices. We have the most amazing server room with air conditioners blasting and server racks. We have complex business systems, file management systems and all that sort of stuff. To make sure we are on top of this complex world, we did a review of our IT systems to work out some priorities so that we can plan for the future. For example, one priority is that we need to make sure our servers are well

housed and are up to the job. We are looking now at the option of contracting out our service support to the private sector rather than doing it in-house. That is an example of the sorts of things we are doing there. That is one of the major recommendations. Another thing we have to do is upgrade our Microsoft software, because the one that we have is many, many years old and will not be supported soon, so we have to upgrade to a new system. It is just about the basics of keeping our IT system up to scratch and doing the job.

Again, we have the money to fund that already, and I can talk about that more if you wish. With regard to continuing to focus on financial sustainability, I started as CEO in late 2009. In the years leading up to that, Legal Aid had had a series of deficit budgets and that had led us in early 2009 into some financial problems. When I came in as CEO, both the board and I were determined to focus very much on financial sustainability for Legal Aid Queensland. It is our highest priority because we want to be able to provide services to Queenslanders without having to be constantly asking for more money and being a burden, and we have been able to do that over the past few years.

**CHAIR:** So you did not ask for more money?

**Mr Reilly:** At the time some more money was allocated.

**CHAIR:** Because we are talking about the GFC et cetera.

**Mr Reilly:** Yes, the GFC hit.

**CHAIR:** So your income went down and Legal Aid asked the government for money. Did they supply it?

**Mr Reilly:** Yes, there was a whole-of-government review. Some more funding was allocated. Our income was stabilised. We were very reliant on interest from the solicitors' trust accounts and less reliant on consolidated revenue, and now that situation has been reversed. The government has said, 'We recognise that Legal Aid is a core service and we'll make sure that most of your state government funding comes from consolidated revenue,' because the interest on the solicitors' trust account is not what it used to be and may never be again just because of the nature of the way money is transferred through law firms and so on.

**CHAIR:** One of the difficulties is that lawyers can be seen to be negligent if they leave the money in a trust account for too long.

**Mr Reilly:** Absolutely.

**CHAIR:** So it is a catch 22.

**Mr Reilly:** Absolutely. So the government has been doing a great job in the past few years of making sure that our core funding is more stable than it was when it was more reliant on that interest than it is now.

**CHAIR:** We are running out of time, but you did mention that one of your core matters as part of budgetary control is the 80 per cent of private practitioners. Based on what people have told me and probably my own experience, I am a product of the seventies where we had certificates and you did not do audits of so many telephone calls and so forth and you did work and if you did it efficiently you got remunerated. But today I think that Legal Aid is probably a third or a half of what you would earn in private practice.

**Mr Reilly:** It is about 30 per cent to 50 per cent.

**CHAIR:** Indeed. One of the difficulties that I have seen that I ask you to comment on is that you do this service really almost at cost and yet the Legal Aid Office would come along a year later and audit you and you would have to have a staff member get all of the files out and you think, 'Is it worth it?' I am just asking you to comment about retaining that 80 per cent, because once you leave Legal Aid you do not go back.

**Mr Reilly:** No.

**CHAIR:** I ask you to comment as to whether there is anything that you have planned for the lawyers of Queensland that might make it viable to stay in Legal Aid.

**Mr Reilly:** Sure. The first thing is that we have been increasing fees over the past few years. Wherever we can, within our current funding we have been trying to be very frugal in how we run our business and therefore free up money to increase fees to make Legal Aid work attractive for private lawyers. Another thing we have been doing is the grants system modernisation project. We have this

big, complex IT business system called LAQ Office and all of the applications for grants of aid are processed through that. We have been trying to make that much easier for the private law firms to use. It is an ageing, bespoke technology. For example, through the improvements we have introduced, lawyers can now attach documents to the electronic applications they lodge. They could not previously do that.

**CHAIR:** Are you almost paperless?

**Mr Reilly:** No. We have an e-lodge system that we encourage private lawyers to use, and they do most of the time. But a large number of applications still come through in paper form, and there are a whole lot of reasons for that. Another improvement to that business system is that—and I know this sounds terrible; it shows how old the system is—when lawyers' admin assistants were doing the application, if they were only halfway through the document they could not save it. They lost the whole thing if they went away. So we have fixed that up so they can save it. So we tried to make that system more user friendly, so that is one thing. We have tried to reduce red tape and pay better fees. In terms of the auditing, it is really interesting and lawyers do get frustrated by that. We are spending taxpayers' money, so it is really important that we fulfil our duty to the community by making sure that the money is being spent wisely.

**CHAIR:** I was not so much referring to auditing per se; it was auditing but having a system that might be certificate based—for example, an application for residence in the federal Magistrates Court. If you roughly know that in the 100 previous cases the mean was about \$2,500, why not just issue a certificate for \$2,500 as a lump sum. We do not want to reinvent the wheel.

**Mr Reilly:** We are looking at some of these things at the moment. For example, we have issued a discussion paper on improving criminal law grants of aid and one of the proposals that we have put in there is a flat fee for pleas of guilty. So rather than lawyers having to invoice us to say that they did a mention or two mentions or they did this or they did that, we just deem it as a flat fee—that is it—if you do the work. So it is a certificate system, if you like, and we have put that to the Law Society to see if they are in support or not and we are looking forward to their feedback.

Another example of a similar initiative is in terms of the outlays we pay on grants of aid. We have said, 'Rather than put you guys through the trouble of itemising it, why don't we arrive at a figure that is sort of a good, solid average figure and we'll just pay that every time?' Again, it is similar to a certificate system. So we are actually trying to identify opportunities to avoid the complex billing—the unnecessarily complex billing—and just have simple fixed fees. A lot of our fees are flat rates anyway, or they are maximum rates if you like. So, yes, I agree with you and it is actually a direction we are heading in. Those are two little initial forays that we are making into that area. If the Law Society is receptive to those sorts of proposals—and the meetings so far have been really good; the discussions about this consultation paper with both the Bar Association and the Law Society have been really nice—I am really looking forward to some positive stuff coming out of it.

**CHAIR:** I think you will find it will not be the principal as much; it will be the remuneration at which you start I suspect.

**Mr Reilly:** Absolutely, but what we are trying to do, interestingly, is to say, 'Can we agree on the principal and then let's talk about the amount?' I think there is a really solid principal in there, and if we can agree that is a good principal then we can haggle over the cash and the actual amount, and that is a negotiation process. So we are heading down that direction. I think if those two get off the ground, then that will be a good basis for saying, 'Okay. Let's look at some others.'

**Mrs MILLER:** Mr Chairman, I table the public holidays for the information of the committee.

**CHAIR:** It is tabled. I call the member for Nicklin.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I note on page 54 of the Service Delivery Statements the opening sentence reads that Legal Aid Queensland's purpose is to provide front-line legal services to financially disadvantaged Queenslanders. Over the last 12 months I have certainly seen more and more people come through my office in downtown Nambour seeking support and assistance for a whole range of reasons. I certainly do not give them legal advice; I point them in the direction of our Nambour Community Centre which now has the community Legal Aid visiting service. I just think that it is wonderful that they are now in Nambour. To the CEO of Legal Aid, I note you spoke very complementarily about the private lawyers in Queensland who do all of the work and how you could not function without them. Is there any recognition that you actually provide to those lawyers who do the work? After five years or 10 years do we recognise them and thank them for their work or is it just one of those things where we take them for granted, or is it too big a job to consider?

**Mr Reilly:** That is a really good question. Our deputy CEO and manager of our regional services pay a lot of visits to preferred suppliers in regional areas—for example, they recently went out through Longreach, Emerald and so on—to make sure they are in touch and talking to people and finding out what their needs are and so on. Do we have a way of saying thank you? No, not at the moment, but it is a nice idea. It is a good one. I should have a look at it.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** As a follow-on question—

**CHAIR:** This might be the last question, I think.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** All right. I see clearly more and more people in financial difficulties. I see more and more calls for help. I note your comments that you have to be financially sustainable. Have you been able to increase staffing to respond to what I am seeing in my office in Nambour? Is that what you are seeing in other offices—that is, there is a real need for more staff to actually help instead of just rely on the private law firms?

**Mr Reilly:** We have a mixed service delivery model, so we have 13 regional offices and each one of those has a small staffing—and that usually includes one to two family lawyers and one to two criminal lawyers plus some front office people—and in our Brisbane office we have big contingents, and then those services are then complemented by our network of private lawyers. Is there increasing demand at the moment? Demand is always strong for Legal Aid services. We say no to a lot of people. Our means test is quite low and Legal Aid in Australia generally is at risk over the next decade, if you like, in that our services have only really been available for people who are almost on welfare. There is something we call the justice gap in Legal Aid commissions for lower and middle class people who struggle to pay lawyers' fees but cannot access Legal Aid either. So there are some interesting policy issues there for government about the extent to which government seeks to have Legal Aid available for what part of the community. That is an issue for all governments in Australia and all governments in Western democracies actually.

**CHAIR:** Attorney and Director-General, are there any matters that you wish to acquaint the committee with in respect of questions on notice?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The director-general has a couple and then I have a couple of matters to finalise.

**Mr Sosso:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. Firstly, the member for Bundamba asked me prior to lunch about exit interviews. I have checked that. Exit interviews are available to any staff person who leaves the organisation. They are not mandatory for the person to participate in and they are optional, but they are certainly offered and they are taken seriously. To the Leader of the Opposition who asked me the question about the 'Budget Measures Summary' on page 8 of the Service Delivery Statements and the impact of the savings measures in terms of redundancies in the department—I think that was the question—can I just say this: while no-one can ever give a guarantee that there will not be voluntary or involuntary redundancies in a department brought about by changes and workplace changes—work goes up, work goes down; populations move out, legislation is repealed—in terms of the way that we are managing our vacancies and the way we are running the department, I can say there are no plans in the financial year coming as a result of any savings strategy to require the redundancy of any staff person in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. With respect to Legal Aid Queensland and the refurbishment of the building, I have some material which I would like to table answering the question from the member for Bundamba.

**CHAIR:** The director-general is asking for leave. Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

**Mr Sosso:** Could I further state that the refurbishments will be completed in February 2014 and the work being undertaken will have no impact on service delivery. Can I finally state that there is a dedicated budget of \$22,000 to cover the department's participation in the RNA Show this year. The theme is 'We're With You Every Step of the Way'. We will have a stand and an area where children can complete an activity sheet and explore Queensland history through using the new Births, Deaths and Marriages family search history tool. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR:** Attorney?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I seek leave to table an answer to a question taken on notice with respect to the backlogs of coronial investigations broken down by region.

**CHAIR:** Leave is granted.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Secondly, I made a comment early on about the return of the Fitzgerald documentation in terms of the Fitzgerald unauthorised releases. I think I noted that as a Callinan-Aroney recommendation. Just to correct the record, it was in fact a recommendation of the

PCMC report, not Callinan-Aroney. I also made reference to the Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service receiving LPITAF money. It is not that service that received LPITAF money; it was the Tenants Union of Queensland that received \$114,738 from LPITAF and \$84,593 from the state. Finally, the member for Bundamba asked about public holidays and the calculation of public holidays. Although remaining the same, the mix of public holidays in the first half of the year is in fact less one in terms of April where I used the period of Anzac Day, Easter and the former May Day. The Queen's birthday is in the middle of the year. That was returned to normal and that is in the middle of the year. So it is actually a decrease in the very first half of the year in terms of the public holidays.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice has expired. On behalf of the committee, Mr Attorney, I thank you and your advisers for your attendance. I remind you that your answers to the questions taken on notice at today's hearing are to be provided to the research director by close of business on Monday, 23 July 2013.

The committee will now break for afternoon tea. The hearing will resume at 4 pm. The transcript of the hearing thus far will be available on the Hansard page of the parliament's website within approximately two hours. We can hardly wait!

**Proceedings suspended from 3.47 pm to 4.03 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 I Stewart, Commissioner of Police

Mr S Gollschewski, Strategy, Policy and Performance

Mr P Brown, Deputy Chief Executive, Corporate Support

Mr P Barron, Deputy Commissioner (Acting), Regional Operations

Mr A MacCracken, Principal Project Officer, Strategy and Business Review Command

#### **Department of Community Safety**

Mr K Anderson, Director-General

Mr M Rallings, Commissioner (Acting), Queensland Corrective Services

Mr R Bowles, Commissioner, Queensland Ambulance Service

Mr L Johnson, Commissioner, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service

Ms D Graham, Principal Adviser, Performance and Planning, Corporate Service



**CHAIR:** 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 of those participating in the hearing today that these proceedings are similar to parliament to the extent that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. 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 switched off or put on silent mode.

I remind members that the standing orders provide that the directors-general and those chief executive officers set out in schedule 7 of the standing orders may be questioned by the committee. The committee welcomes the attendance of the member for Logan, Mr Michael Pucci MP, who is replacing the member for Toowoomba North, Mr Trevor Watts MP, for this evening's session. I also welcome as a guest member Mrs Desley Scott MP, the member for Woodridge. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask all advisers to identify themselves before answering a question.

I 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 is before the committee—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Thank you, Mr Chairman, and good afternoon to you and to the other committee members here this afternoon. This LNP state government takes the issue of law and order very seriously. In our first year of government we have been working hard to increase the Queensland Police Service and the community's faith in Queensland's law enforcement system. The Queensland Police Service revitalisation has been a central focus to ensure that we have not only one of the best services in the world but also one of which the 11,055 police officers, 371 recruits and 3,705-strong support team are proud to be members.

The Queensland Police Service is charged with protecting the lives of nearly 4.7 million Queenslanders in addition to property and state infrastructure. This government is working hard revitalising the service to ensure that serving officers have the resources, the technical capability and the legislative tools they need to keep all of us in this great state safe. Since coming into government

we have been doing this through a four-stage approach: increasing the number of police officers; reducing red tape; increasing public transparency, particularly in the field of technology; and introducing laws and subsequent penalties that not only meet community expectations but also alleviate the frustration that officers have felt seeing the same offenders breaking the law and receiving only a slap on the wrist, as happened in the past.

Last financial year we saw both police academies operating at capacity, as 300 recruits—on top of attrition rates—began training at both Oxley and Townsville. Including these additional recruits, approximately 800 new first-year constables hit Queensland streets last year and are doing a fantastic job in their respective communities. In the 2012-13 financial year, we saw more than 130 additional officers take up posts in the south-east region, achieving an LNP election commitment made to the people of the Gold Coast and Logan three years earlier than promised. We have continued funding Queensland's first police helicopter and, after many years of waiting, there has been great progress made in making mobile data for the Queensland Police Service a reality.

This year, the revitalisation and reconstruction of the Queensland Police Service continues in a number of ways. The Police Commissioner, Ian Stewart, has commenced implementing his restructure of front-line services, which will see even more police officer positions return to the front line. The financial year ahead is just as bright for the Queensland Police Service revitalisation, with the 2013-14 \$2 billion-plus budget swelling the front-line ranks by an additional 267 officers. The budget also includes \$38 million for new police vehicles and \$3 million for continued police helicopter services across the Gold Coast and South-East Queensland.

We will also see \$70.6 million for new and upgraded operational equipment, including \$8.2 million towards three new catamarans; \$29.5 million to support the continued deployment of mobile and fixed speed and red-light cameras to reduce road trauma; \$17.7 million for capital works projects across Queensland; \$14.5 million as part of an ongoing technology refreshment and improvement program; \$4.8 million to support the Queensland Police Service network; and \$1 million in 2013-14 to help revitalise Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers as part of our overall \$4 million program that started in the last financial year.

Without doubt, these are very exciting times to be part of the Queensland Police Service, and the work each officer has undertaken over the past 12 months, especially during Tropical Cyclone Oswald, has been nothing but outstanding. I sincerely thank every Queensland Police Service officer for their commitment, bravery and, most of all, passion for serving the people of Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Minister. What I might do is, at least just briefly and preliminarily, outline how we intend to run the questioning. We will operate in 20-minute blocks. So for 20 minutes both opposition and government members will ask those questions for the reason that there may well be follow-up questions, which can be done in that 20-minute block. I might ask the member for Rockhampton if he would like to commence with a question.

**Mr BYRNE:** Thanks. Minister, I refer to page 1 of the Queensland Police Service SDS, the section that deals with ministerial responsibilities. I ask: do you recall travelling to Far North Queensland on Friday, 25 May and Saturday, 26 May last year? What was the purpose of that trip? That would have been your first trip to Cairns as the minister.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. I have visited Cairns on at least six or seven occasions over the last 12 months and have made other visits to the surrounding areas. Obviously, we had the very important Operation Cairns Escalate in relation to a build-up of offences, predominantly over the last 20 years, in and around the Cairns area. So we have continued to make sure that that operation runs smoothly.

The first phase of that operation was, obviously, the instigation of the task force. The second phase, whilst that was going on, was increasing the number of officers into that particular area. I believe—and I am happy to provide a more detailed number—there are approximately 13 other officers in that area. The next phase is a whole-of-government task force, which is going to be unique for Cairns, and it will eventually start rolling out through the rest of the year.

For those particular dates, in relation to Cairns, I travelled on the 11th to the 13th; is that correct?

**Mr BYRNE:** No, 25 May and 26 May.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Twenty-fifth of—

**Mr BYRNE:** May and 26 May last year, shortly after you became minister.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Yes, I may have travelled. As I said, I have travelled to Cairns on approximately seven occasions in relation to police and other areas of the portfolios I administer. I am happy to take that on notice. If there is a particular instance—

**CHAIR:** I might just question the member for Rockhampton. That is in the previous year. Is it really something that you want to pursue?

**Mr BYRNE:** There is in particular because it comes to, as I said, the SDS as it deals with ministerial responsibilities. In relation to that trip—

**CHAIR:** Hold on. I think we need to resolve this, because we are dealing with the budgetary process for this financial year. So unless you can see a particular relevance to the committee, I think we will have to move on to the next question.

**Mr BYRNE:** I think it is relevant, because it goes to the very essence of the way in which the minister exercises his responsibilities. On that basis, it needs to be aired either here or in some other forum. So I think the opportunity is here and I think I would like to explore that.

**CHAIR:** I can offer some advice in asking you to generalise the question, but if you are going to ask for specific dates prior to 30 June, I am going to disallow it.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** For clarity, if he writes to me later, after the estimates, I am happy to reply, considering that it is not in relation to the SDS that we have before us, Mr Chairman.

**Mr BYRNE:** It is in relation to the SDS, because the SDS reflects on your responsibilities as the minister and there is no statute of limitations associated with that, so to speak. So this goes to the very nature of the way in which ministerial responsibility is exercised.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I ask that you to respect the committee.

**CHAIR:** This is the position and the way in which I am going to call it. Unless it comes within the ambit of this budgetary period, the question will not be allowed. If you wish to expand the question or make it relevant to this budgetary period and indicate the basis for it, I will allow it. But those two dates of themselves will not allow the question to proceed.

**Mr BYRNE:** I believe that the cost for this activity would have been accrued during this financial year.

**CHAIR:** Okay. Proceed with your question and we will do it on that basis.

**Mr BYRNE:** So in relation to that event, was there any personal reason for you to travel to Cairns, on your first visit to Cairns as the Minister for Police?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I really thank the member for the question. Travel occurs within a particular financial year. For something that happened prior to this SDS period, about which we are before this committee, I am happy to get details back to the member.

**CHAIR:** Next question? We will move on from there.

**Mr BYRNE:** Like I say, I believe the costs were accrued in this financial year so it is a matter for discussion.

**CHAIR:** With respect, he said he is going to get back to you about that. Are you happy with that?

**Mr BYRNE:** Not really. I want to keep going on this.

**CHAIR:** He doesn't know. I think that is what you are saying, Minister?

**Mr BYRNE:** Let me get to the point. Did the minister instruct his staff to prepare or have a professional reason for that trip to Cairns manufactured?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Mr Chairman?

**Mr BYRNE:** Do you recall instructing staff—

**CHAIR:** Unless you can make it relevant to this budgetary period I am not going to allow this question. You still have not made it relevant. This is the present SDS.

**Mr BYRNE:** I find that rather unusual, but anyway. I have put my opinion. I want my objection noted. Let us move on. Queensland Police Service SDS page 3, \$63 million to recruit 300 new police officers. I refer to parliament question on notice No. 96 where you denied that recruits had obtained merit ratings and entered the academy without fully completing all of the requirements. The unofficial Police Academy Facebook page, which has 792 members, clearly states that recruits did not

complete the obstacle course on 16 February due to rain. They were given merit ratings and some entered the Police Academy on 1 April 2013. Police Minister, was the obstacle course completed by all recruits on 16 February 2013 and will you table the recruits' paperwork and supporting declarations to say that they were completed?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Through you, Mr Chairman, I thank the member for the question. It is an important question, particularly in relation to the professionalism and the accountability of the Queensland Police Service. Questions like this, that are obviously about the detail, I will pass to the Commissioner in a short period of time, but I would like to reiterate the high standards that we place on our police officers. They have to go above and beyond many of the other requirements of many positions in other professions and they go about it in a professional way. They swear an oath to serve the people of Queensland and we set a high standard in relation to their recruiting process.

Also in relation to police officers, we know that they see the worst of the worst but they also see the best and we have to ensure that we have proper training in place in relation to the overall aspects of attending both the Townsville academy and the Oxley Police Academy as well. But for the operational details I will pass to the Commissioner.

**Commissioner Stewart:** Thank you. Thank you for the question, sir. The Queensland Police Service operates two recruiting pathways, the first is the Police Recruit Entry Pathway and it began in its current form on 1 June 2012. Applicants are selected based on their physical health and fitness, personal integrity, cognitive ability and literacy, psychological suitability, life and work experience and practical policing skills which includes physical fitness and communication skills. The new process also required applicants to take a 2.5 hour test. If successful in that exam they are invited to submit an online application. The QPS also considers academic and vocational education qualifications.

The recruitment criteria have changed 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. The average age of our PREP, as I said the Police Recruit Entry Pathway, recruits is presently 28 years. But the new process gives younger people the opportunity to consider a career in policing. This brings significant diversity to the Queensland Police Service. Whilst some recruits will be young, the scheme also allows people with a range of life skills wanting a career change to apply. The new entry requirements bring Queensland into line with other Australian police jurisdictions. They enable Queensland to compete for the best recruits with other states. Since the March 2012 state election 1,045 recruits have commenced police recruit training as at 21 June this year.

In the other pathway, the PACE program, the Police Abridged Competency Education program, the QPS also seeks to bring enabled experienced officers from other jurisdictions into the organisation. The PACE program was reintroduced on 4 October 2012. As at 21 June 2013, 96 PACE recruits have entered the program, including 54 applicants from overseas, seven former QPS officers and 35 from interstate and federal jurisdictions. The average age of our PACE recruits is 35 years.

In fact, as I said to you earlier, we certainly look at a person's fitness as part of the entry standard. At the present time there is no obstacle course in our current program. That is not part of the standards that we use. We use a more scientific test called a beep test which is a back and forward running test that you may be aware of, sir.

**Mr BYRNE:** I am familiar with that test.

**Commissioner Stewart:** I have recently undertaken it myself, which was quite an experience. But that is the test that we use to grade our recruits. I hope that that helps to answer your question

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Faster than the streaker at the Origin, I believe.

**Mr BYRNE:** Thank you, Commissioner. I am well aware of all those matters that you just raised there. That is not what I am inquiring about. I am inquiring about the way in which potential recruits are communicating about their interface with the Queensland Police Service. I am inquiring about this particular matter where they are on Facebook saying that they didn't do what was required and they were given a free run. As far as I am concerned, Minister, either you have answered honestly on a question on notice or the people who are being recruited are reflecting problems with their baseline integrity because they are on Facebook making a big deal about it. So, it points to me towards either the people on Facebook are saying that they were given a free pass which points to the issues of your own officers at the academy at that point, or they are making things up and that they have substantial character flaws in the first place. I am wondering whether you have a view. Which do you think it is?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. If the member has any particular details in relation to the accusations that he is making I ask him to please put it down in writing and I am happy to accept it and the Police Service will investigate it. Obviously integrity needs to be at the highest standards and we will make sure the matter is properly investigated. If people have done something wrong I am sure that the Commissioner, who has a great reputation in relation to the disciplinary process, but also being fair, would be able to look into that matter as well. I do hope that the member does take the opportunity to actually put the details down on paper and isn't just going to say it without having some founding information.

**Mr BYRNE:** I am concerned about the entry standards. That is what this is about. I am concerned about the pressure to recruit the numbers, that is what it all points back to, and the quality of those officers potentially being recruited.

**CHAIR:** I understand what you say, member for Rockhampton. You have got an assertion, an allegation, but it is not evidence and it is not something that we can deal with today. The minister doesn't know about it and I don't know that we can really advance that question any further. We cannot really put it as a question on notice. I think effectively what the minister is saying is produce what evidence you have got and the Commissioner will deal with it, as with any matter where somebody is alleging that something did not happen and it should have happened.

**Mr BYRNE:** I suppose, if you want to cut to the chase on this, I have got other examples which I will provide you later but they go directly to the ethical standards and integrity of some recruits entering the academy. I am concerned and I ask the question whether the cuts to Ethical Standards Command, the mass redundancies of senior officers and the extreme pressure on academy staff to produce these numbers, may have led to fudging of the standards or compromise of the ability to filter out unsuitable recruits? What are you going to do to ensure that ethical standards and integrity of applicants are of the highest standards at all times?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. There are basically two parts to the question, one in relation to ethical standards and the seriousness that the QPS has in relation to ethical standards, as well as the number, the qualifications and so forth. It is of interest to me, especially as a new minister and as a new government, but the mere fact is that the total strength from 2011 to the present time has actually increased by an additional three officers. The total length of service for officers in ethical standards since we have come into government has increased from 1,827.06 years length of service to 1,916.88 in relation to the total length of service. If you are even trying to use that as a marker to say that standards in some way have certainly slipped, you yourself, having been a member of a military style organisation, surely know that people can be in positions for numbers of years and it does not necessarily mean that they have the overall best qualities of a junior officer. There are different life experiences, different positions and places that those officers will serve in and they gather those life experiences that they bring. I certainly have the greatest faith in the ethical standards operation. I know the officer in charge, Assistant Commissioner Peter Crawford. I have spoken to him a number of times about the great work and the expectations that I have in that particular area. I have confidence in that particular area because the majority of those officers are of a senior rank, they are of a detective quality, but I would like, for further detail, to pass to Mr Commissioner.

**Commissioner Stewart:** Thank you, Mr Byrne, for the question. I would like to reassure this committee and you, Mr Byrne, that there has been no reduction in the quality of people we have in the Ethical Standards Command. There has been a slight drop in the overall numbers of staff at ethical standards and partly that is because we have removed the research function and moved it to a different area of the organisation. So that actually caused a drop in the overall numbers. In terms of the redundancies of commissioned officers, we did reduce the number of commissioned officers in ethical standards, but as you might be aware, sir, previously we did not require any of the commissioned officers who went to ethical standards to have a base of detective qualification. That didn't mean that there weren't some of the inspectors with that qualification, just that wasn't one of the base requirements.

What we have done through the restructure of the organisation is that we have made it a base requirement that people who go there, the investigators, and who are usually in that range of senior constable to senior sergeant level, certainly we have asked that those more senior people have detective qualifications. So in actual fact I believe we have probably strengthened the investigative ability of our ethical standards. The other thing we have done with ethical standards is to make sure that each of the investigative teams still have at least one commissioned officer in charge, plus there

is a series of quality control mechanisms over and above the investigation teams that look at each of the investigations. They use peer review, so this is their colleagues reviewing their work as well within those teams. I would like to assure the committee that one of the things that has been very close to our hearts and strategies in the restructure was ensuring that there was no reduction in the quality of the people who are at ethical standards and are keeping an eye on, through the investigative process, all of those more serious end investigations that need to be done from time to time.

**Mr BYRNE:** Thank you. I might just go on to some of the crime rate issues. I refer to Queensland Police Service SDS pages 12 and 13 which list the target estimates for serious car crashes and estimates the fatalities and serious injuries, et cetera and, of course, question on notice 18 to this committee where the rates of deaths and hospitalisations from serious crashes are sharply increasing per 100,000 people. I note that there has been a cut of 225 staff from the road safety program and ask why are serious car crashes projected to be increasing on this government's watch?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. I warn the committee that this is an area of interest that I pay a great deal of attention to. I converse with the commissioner every morning of the week, 365 days a year, in relation to the road toll. Currently it is at 162, which is 19 above last year. That is why, as a government, we take it very seriously. We have obviously introduced legislation in relation to evade police powers. For an offence of evade police, the average person would get a fine of approximately \$350. We have increased that to \$5,500 and a loss of licence for two years, and I make no apologies for that. We have introduced the anti-hooning legislation to send a clear message that if you commit a type 1 offence on two occasions, your vehicle will be either confiscated or destroyed. It sends a clear message. It also changes the organisational structure, because prior to that an officer would take approximately eight hours to process one offender. When this comes in in November, it will be a matter of minutes or half an hour for a police officer to do that. That will change the dynamics of the officers on the street. We have made sure that we have increased the number of police officers. We have committed to 1,100 new police officers over four years, returning 200 officers from nonoperational duties to operational duties. Obviously, the restructure is about ensuring that we have a greater focus on the street in relation to road safety.

In relation to traffic offences, the direction we are going in is having more police physically out intercepting offenders. I think as many members here and many members of the community know, going through a device is not the same deterrent as having an actual officer talk to a person to let them know about the seriousness of that particular occasion.

**Mr BYRNE:** I understand all of that. This is not because of population increase or decrease. This is a rate per 100,000. Despite all the measures that have been introduced by your government, the projection is for an increase—and I think a substantial increase—in fatalities and hospitalisations. I do not understand, from what you are saying, how that estimate can be in the budget papers. I am perplexed. Have you any idea why that would be the case?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** The Queensland Police Service estimates for performance and outcomes do not set the targets. They are aspirational estimates.

**Mr BYRNE:** They are trying to increase the death rate?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** We have to set them at a standard to ensure that obviously we have those estimates. In relation to traffic offences, and particularly road safety, we are making sure that we get rid of red tape and we get rid of bureaucracy in relation to enforcement. You would have seen earlier this year the fatal four project. We have increased that to the fatal five. Previously we had speeding, seatbelts, drink driving and fatigue, and now we have inattention and we are making sure that we are out there enforcing the law.

**Mr BYRNE:** I understand all that, Minister. If all these measures are in place, all the things that you just described to me—and for over 18 months we have debated the pros and cons of that—why in the budget papers are we talking about these numbers going up per 100,000, and substantially going up? I do not understand. I understand what you are saying and I agree. We are not having a huge argument about that. Why are the numbers projected to go to that level with substantial increases? I do not understand that

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Before passing to the commissioner, I would say that the fact is that we are ensuring that we take as many precautions as possible to make sure that we change the legislation to provide police officers with less red tape and bureaucracy, to ensure that we have more police officers out there, and to also make sure that we have the policies and procedures to allow them to get on with reducing the road toll. Over the years, you will see peaks and troughs. Then what you will

see—and hopefully what we will see in the future—is with the strengthening of the legislation and greater enforcement, coupled with education, is a decrease. I cannot look into the mirror and see what is going to happen in the future. What I can say is that, in relation to road safety, we will take every step possible. I would prefer that we did not have to issue one traffic offence notice. I would prefer that the police officers did not attend one single accident, but the reality is that they do. That is why we have to ensure that we have road safety measures in place, that we have the legislation in place to protect fellow Queenslanders, and that we also free up our police officers from bureaucracy and get them out on the street enforcing the road rules. That is why we have changed the fatal four and we have brought in new legislation. Commissioner, would you like to comment?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr Byrne, for the question. Obviously this is an area very close to our hearts. One of the aspirational goals of the Queensland Police Service at the moment is to make the community safer and that includes road safety. Certainly, the estimates that are identified in the SDS are put there simply to indicate what the trends are looking like at the moment. It does not mean that we accept those trends; it means that this gives us something to work towards to try to reduce those trends. We do that on a year in, year out basis.

The trends, particularly in fatalities, are quite perplexing when you see the rises and falls in that. You might be aware that I think 2010 was the lowest year ever recorded in the rate of fatal accidents. Since then, we have seen slow-moving growth again. We are taking steps within the Queensland Police Service to try to reduce that. Bear in mind that enforcement is only one component of the road safety issue. The one that I think we need to work more on is personal responsibility of drivers because that is the true way to get—

**Mr BYRNE:** I understand that but what you as a service and the minister are saying in the budget papers is, 'Despite our best efforts, we expect substantially more Queenslanders per 100,000 to be killed on the roads, despite all the measures we are putting in place'—

**CHAIR:** Could I just interrupt you there. Member for Rockhampton, I think that has been asked probably three or four times.

**Mr BYRNE:** I am still waiting for an answer.

**CHAIR:** I think it has been answered.

**Mr BYRNE:** I just want an explanation.

**CHAIR:** The difficulty that we have is that the Queensland police minister and service are here. When I was at the Main Roads department back in 1979 or so, I asked an engineer how to decrease the road toll. He said, 'Well, it's very simple. You separate people by 30 or 40 metres, rather than one or two feet.' It is not Police Service by itself. It is transport, infrastructure. We are talking about the Bruce Highway right at this moment. I think we cannot really pursue this issue. It is more complex than simply the Police Service. I will ask the member for Broadwater for her question.

**Miss BARTON:** Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, I refer to page 3 of the SDS, specifically where it refers to \$3 million in funding in 2013-14 to continue providing police helicopter services to the Gold Coast and South-East Queensland. Could you please outline how this is making a very real and positive impact on policing in the south-east corner?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. I note her interest in and thank her for attending the many functions in relation to the Queensland Police Service and our other emergency services, particularly in the south-east and in her electorate. I thank her for attending the new helicopter launch at the surf lifesaving venue. It is important to provide police with air support for criminal investigations and, particularly, high-speed pursuits. It is part of our overall pursuit policy that we want to make sure that we reduce unnecessary incidents.

Helicopters can be used as a surveillance and information gathering platform. The government is providing \$3 million in 2013-14 as part of an \$18 million commitment over four years to deliver police helicopter services for the Gold Coast and South-East Queensland. The current police helicopter service is being leased from Surf Life Saving Queensland until July 2014. The government is committed to delivering two dedicated police helicopters for the Gold Coast and South-East Queensland by 2014-15. The Queensland Police Service has commenced a tender process for the delivery of those services. An options analysis is currently being undertaken and the procurement phase is expected to commence in September-October 2013. The government has now announced a review of its air operations to ensure efficiency and value for money. At this stage, the review will not affect the Queensland Police Service helicopter service.

Since its introduction on 7 November 2011 and as at 30 June, the Gold Coast helicopter has undertaken 1,335 accumulative flight hours, 2,146 planned operations and 1,475 task and response to calls to the community, being the first police unit to arrive at the scene on over 75 per cent of occasions. We have seen many of those events in the media. It certainly shows the modern techniques that we are continuing to improve in the Police Service. It has attended 337 traffic related taskings, 1,254 crime hot spot patrols and 487 responses to community complaints, including offences such as public order, assaults, home invasions and shootings.

I will go into a few examples where the helicopters have been instrumental. First of all, I thank the previous Gold Coast City Council for its commitment, many years ago, to fund the initial helicopter service in the Gold Coast area. Since the election, we made a commitment to establish two helicopters. Certainly you can see the value in those services. For example, on 22 June 2013, while on a task patrol the helicopter's infrared system identified a vehicle being driven in an aggressive manner. Ground units were unable to intercept the vehicle, but the helicopter was able to track it down to the location where it was dumped. The helicopter then tracked the offenders and coordinated the ground units, which were able to arrest the offenders without incident. The vehicle had been stolen during a burglary and had been sighted at other burglaries. The primary offender was subsequently charged with multiple offences, including evade police.

That is just one clear example of how having this latest technology assists police in their tasks, negating the event of a possible pursuit, making sure offenders are located and arrested by police and brought before the courts, while also being able to coordinate other resources into an area in a safe manner. They are so valuable. There are many other fine examples. In my own electorate, they were tasked to the Bundaberg area and the community certainly embraced them. They certainly are the heroes of the sky, along with the EMQ helicopters. Together they do a magnificent job serving the people of Queensland. They are a particularly dedicated crew that certainly go way above their normal duties. I thank the member for the question.

**Mr PUCCI:** As I am sure the minister is aware from his many visits to Logan, the people of Logan and I are very appreciative of his commitment to the area. Minister, you would be aware that the issue of young people in the criminal justice system comes up often. Page 2 of the SDS states that one of the Queensland Police Service's challenges is the overrepresentation of young people in the criminal justice system. Minister, can you explain how police are tackling young people's involvement in out-of-control parties?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. Only today in a media outlet we saw mention of two fine officers who have been nominated for bravery having been involved in a particular incident. When you read the story of their dedication, it goes to show that the people of Queensland are in good hands in relation to having fine police officers. Those officers certainly went through their training in their own particular manner. They rose to the high standards that the Police Service expects. It was pleasing to see that, even with the deterrent of being assaulted so violently, they had the keenness and passion to get on with the job, to get out onto the streets. One officer's comments about the way that he wanted to help young children certainly brought a lump to my throat. He is very inspirational, not just for his family but for many other families he will assist in the years to come.

This government has acted to send a strong message to young people that it is not acceptable to break the law, show disrespect to hardworking adults or turn our streets into battle zones with out-of-control parties. We have provided local councils with the power to shut down long-term holiday houses that are used as party houses. Organisers of so-called Facebook parties will soon risk massive fines and prison terms as the state government cracks down on out-of-control events. Legislation is being drafted to penalise wild party organisers—those are particular event organisers—and that will be considered by cabinet in September this year. Parents allowing children—and it is not so much the parents; it is the adult people in these particular instances and there are only a small few—to hold uncontrollable parties could be slapped with a fine of up to \$12,100 or 12 months behind bars. If the event is held at a place where the organiser has no lawful authority to hold it, the party organisers may face a fine of up to \$18,150 or three years imprisonment. The community and the police are sick of unsafe and unruly parties putting people at risk. It is time the organisers are brought to task.

The proposed legislation will also give the police the ability to recover the cost of officers required to be brought in to break up these out-of-control parties. This will be based on an hourly rate for the resources required. Additionally, the proposed legislation will give the police powers to charge



people who fail to comply with their directions when dispersing a wild party. Those who fail to comply with police directions can also receive fines of more than \$12,000. This includes everyone from those not moving on to the DJ for not turning off the music when directed.

People looking to hold responsible parties can still register them by visiting the Queensland Police Service's Party Safe website or by visiting their local police station. They can also get information to help plan their party and reduce the risk of problems on the night. Most responsible Queenslanders already do this. In the 12 months to 1 May over 6,000 parties were registered with the police. Parties often become out of control when information about their location is spread through social media. The member for Rockhampton might want to look up the Facebook page and assist police with their investigations. Police are monitoring Facebook and other social media to help target out-of-control parties.

The Queensland Police Service has also established Project Iris to help tackle this issue. Project Iris will provide specialist support to detect and respond to social media parties and develop information for the police and the community about the issues surrounding parties that are advertised on social media.

The police also work in partnership with other government and non-government agencies to help support young people. This is done through programs such as the Queensland Early Intervention Pilot Program. This program helps young people take personal responsibility for their drinking behaviour. SupportLink is another great program that helps young people and their families at risk of criminal, self-harm and antisocial behaviour. In 2012 the Queensland Police Service made over 9½ thousand referrals to SupportLink for young people and their parents.

Programs like school based police officers and the adopt-a-school program are also helping young children get back on track. The Adopt-a-Cop program has been running in schools for over 28 years. I remember being an Adopt-a-Cop myself and having the privilege of helping young Queenslanders. The government has also provided an extra 15 school based police officers throughout the state. There are now 50 school based police officer positions covering 57 state high schools and colleges. As part of their duties, school based police officers support students at risk of offending. Together, these important initiatives are helping young people and police work together to keep our neighbourhoods safe.

I would also mention that I released the latest myPolice blog in Rockhampton recently. Whilst we have Neighbourhood Watch groups—and they do a remarkable job; there are two new Neighbourhood Watch groups in the Gold Coast area—not everyone wants to go to a Neighbourhood Watch group. The myPolice blog gives younger members of the community the opportunity to engage, to give feedback and to reduce the fear of crime among young people. They provide a secure point of call for the provision of information. That information is filtered in such a way as to stop a lot of rumour-mongering and negativity, particularly amongst young people.

We are doing a considerable lot in this space. The officers in that area are particularly dedicated to that task. If they can get on top of young children's antisocial behaviour as quickly as possible, we might be able to save them. We all know that young children will test the boundaries and push the limits. They need boundaries, but they also need safe boundaries. The people who organise these Facebook parties are bringing pain and suffering to young children. If they are not applying fees then they obviously at times are dealing in alcohol or drugs which affect young children. As a father of five, I certainly know the importance of ensuring that we set boundaries and high standards for young children in Queensland.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Broadwater.

**Miss BARTON:** Minister, I refer to page 2 of the SDS where it states that Queensland will host the 2014 G20 leaders summit and the finance ministers meeting, when leaders from the world's biggest economies will gather on our shores. Could you please explain to the committee what efforts are being made to provide safety and security during these events?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. It is an important question. It is going to be a great event to showcase the new Queensland—the great state with great opportunities. Before answering your question, I point out that this afternoon I had the pleasure to commission a new supertruck for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. It is worth \$1 million. The truck has scientific capability. The scientific capabilities contained in that vehicle to detect chemical, biological and

radiological substances are outstanding. It is the only one in Australia. It is obviously of world standard. It is able to pick up airborne chemicals and residues—for example, explosives or other devices. It will be a great asset. We will be able to use that truck and its equipment right across the state.

I come back to this committee and its examination of the SDS. The Queensland Police Service certainly is a major partner in the planning and delivery of security and safety during the G20 events in Queensland in 2014. In November 2014 Brisbane will host a Group of Twenty leaders summit. Up to 4,000 delegates and 3,000 media representatives are expected to attend the G20 leaders summit. The G20 finance ministers and central bank governors meeting will be held in Cairns in September 2014, with up to 2,000 delegates and media representatives involved there.

Early estimates indicate that around 2,000 police will be needed to deliver security and public safety services for the finance ministers meeting and up to 4½ thousand for the leaders summit. The Queensland Police Service has established the QPS G20 group and is well advanced in planning to ensure the security of delegates and the community during these particular events. The group is working with planning staff from other state and Australian government agencies. All Australian police agencies as well as New Zealand's police have pledged in-principle support to provide police and resources to assist.

The Queensland Police Service is organising training to meet the increased security, dignitary protection, public order and intelligence needed for both meetings. The identified budget for all QPS G20 related training and exercises is approximately \$5.98 million. As the G20 event is a Commonwealth government responsibility, the Commonwealth will pay the majority of the G20 costs, including for training, as it has for similar events held in other states.

A number of training courses will be conducted across a broad range of capabilities including dignitary protection, motorcades, public order and crowd management. Some training, such as dignitary protection, has already commenced. The total number of QPS staff to receive G20 related training will be determined after discussions with other interstate agencies about the availability of their staff for deployment in Queensland in 2014. It is anticipated that all required training will be completed by September 2014. That will be well in advance of the event. Wherever possible, the QPS G20 group will strive to minimise face-to-face training and seek varied options to provide training through the use of available technologies.

In early 2014 readiness exercises will take place internally within the QPS and externally with state and Commonwealth agencies. They will test all facets of the G20 planning prior to this event. The Australian government has given an undertaking that no Queensland community will be left with inadequate police resources because of the G20 summit.

The Australian government has also agreed to contribute funding for the implementation of a secure digital radio communications network required to support the G20 events. The Queensland government wireless network is currently under development to deliver this capacity. Funding for the QWN is subject to current state and Commonwealth negotiations.

Special events legislation, the G20 Safety and Security Act, is also being progressed and is due to go before cabinet shortly. This new legislation will provide police with extra powers within specific security zones to ensure the safety of the public and the security of visiting delegations. The new act will commence immediately before and cease immediately after the G20 event in Brisbane. You would have already heard a number of media statements about a holiday for the period of the G20 to assist with security measures and to negate any possible interference with the normal lives of people in the Brisbane area.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Ipswich West.

**Mr CHOAT:** My question relates to social media and community relations. Can I just say that my police district is extremely well served in that space. Sergeant Nadine Webster and Senior Constable Stephanie Corless do brilliant work. I was with them yesterday at the Rocky Horror Road Show. They do great work and bring credit to your department. Getting back to why we are here, page 3 of the SDS refers to the release of a number of myPolice blogs around the state. They let police swap information with the public in a quick and easy way. Would you please outline how these blogs are helping police connect better with their local communities?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. First of all, I would like to thank him for his commitment in supporting the Queensland Police Service and his community. I will be up there shortly to open the new fire station at Brassall. The member has hit the nail on the head in relation to

how the community connects with police. The adage is that the police are only as good as the information they receive. Often when police attend it means that other parts of the community are failing.

The use of technology is very important for the Queensland Police Service. In particular, the myPolice blogs allow police officers to provide their local communities with information on local issues, crime prevention tips, current crime trends and public alerts and warnings. They also allow police to interact with a part of the community that may not have the ability or time to attend Neighbourhood Watch meetings or drop into the local police station.

The myPolice blog helps officers to target crime and receive community feedback at a grassroots level. In the event of a disaster, myPolice blogs also provide crucial information for residents and visitors, including updates on road closures and wet-weather conditions. The first myPolice blog was launched in late 2011 at Dutton Park. Other myPolice blogs are now operating in my home town of Bundaberg and on the Gold Coast, in Cairns, Gympie, Maryborough, Mount Isa, Pine Rivers, Redcliffe, Rockhampton, South Brisbane, Townsville and Wynnum. They are operating in the Police Museum and in the Stock and Rural Crime Investigation Squad. There are the state-wide news and Commissioner's blogs as well. Further development of the myPolice blogs is continuing, and it is planned to be extended state-wide. Release of myPolice blogs for Logan and the Sunshine Coast are planned in the near future.

The myPolice blog pages have been viewed 10,221,124 times. You must admit that that is an outstanding number and an outstanding success. The blogs also send more than seven million emails a month to subscribers. The QPS has a Facebook page with more than 395,000 Facebook followers. There were more than 39,000 Twitter followers as at 4 July 2013. These channels are posted to and monitored 24 hours a day. The Queensland Police Service currently averages 14 posts a day through Facebook and Twitter in addition to 22 myPolice blog posts each day.

QPS social media, including myPolice blogs, has resulted in numerous examples of missing persons being located and offenders being identified. Specific matters still before the courts, including a homicide investigation, have been assisted by social media. During natural disasters social media enables the QPS to communicate quickly and effectively with the public.

The QPS social media channels, including [qlalert.com](http://qlalert.com), provide public safety information direct to large sections of the community in a disaster, enabling the timely sharing of information. These channels received several million hits a day during the 2013 floods which is quite remarkable. I would like to put a bit of a plug in here. I do not like to pick out one particular media outlet, but I know from recent disasters over the years that the *Courier-Mail* website, believe it or not, has had an exceptional number of hits and the feedback that I have had from members from all around Queensland is that they have certainly been able to utilise that particular media forum, even though I suggest that people go to the QPS site first. It is great to see not just internal media but other media coming to the fore in times of disasters. I am very passionate about the myPolice blogs. I could talk about this all night because it reiterates the communication between the Police Service and the community. Commissioner, would you like to comment?

**CHAIR:** I think that should be sufficient. As there are a million-odd hits, we are happy for you to continue to talk about the blogs.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** It is quite phenomenal because that information is filtered information. It also reduces the fear of crime because you do not have to be in your local town, looking it up on your phone or your iPad or your computer. You can be anywhere in the world and you can know what is happening in your community. This is all about having a connection between the community and the police officers and having the technology but also having that open data system which we have released so that people know exactly what is happening in their community, besides waiting to attend other meetings later on. So it is a very exciting time.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Nicklin.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Minister, I refer you to our Premier's recent request to buy local and support Queensland businesses where possible, and I ask: has a directive been issued to relevant departmental purchasing officers consistent with the Premier's request? Have any contracts been entered into by your department for the supply of goods and services that you can point to that are a direct result of this request to buy local and support locals in Queensland?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. The member has the same feelings as I do in relation to buying locally. I know the Minister for Tourism and Small Business is aligned with that as well. For me personally, I want to ensure that the Queensland Police Service is able to buy local but

also to get value for every dollar. So if there is an enormous increase in the cost of a particular item in Queensland, obviously the average mum and dad and family member would expect us to look elsewhere in Australia if we are able to get significant savings for the taxpayers of Queensland. But as a general rule we always look at the Queensland options first. That is part of our tendering process.

I can only allude to the other part of the question at this estimates process. There will be some significant announcements in the coming weeks in relation to substantial purchases here in Queensland that I know all Queenslanders will be very proud of that is pertinent to the capital expenditure that we have before us here this evening. The only reason I cannot go into further detail at the moment is due to the confidentiality of private contracts. As soon as I am able to, I will let the good member know.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** The reason for the question is that, whether it is ambulance officers, the SES, the Rural Fire Brigade, the police or the fireies, there is significant capital expenditure as part of your portfolio.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** There certainly is, not just in procurement but in the construction area as well, and in making sure that we get the best deal for Queenslanders right across-the-board not only in my overall portfolio but also in the Queensland Police Service, because we are very proud parochial Queenslanders, as you all know.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I have a further question to the minister. It is in the context of asset sales or the pending sale of some land that schools are located on. Minister, in my electorate we have the Nambour Police Station and that has a common neighbour being the former Nambour fire brigade site. That also adjoins the current police residence and the current Nambour Courthouse is actually situated on QPS land. Are there any plans or investigations for the disposal of any part of that complex, be it the police residence, the courthouse or the former fire station site, that you are aware of?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** In the first instance I am happy to take that particular question on notice to make sure that I give you a thorough answer in terms of those particular lot numbers and everything else. There is a matrix generally over any sale of a police asset which involves community consultation. So I would suggest that if particularly the member in the area has not heard anything yet—

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I have not, no.

**Mr DEMPSEY:**—then I would be fairly confident that we would not be heading in that direction. But we also have to make sure that we have identified the growth areas and that we have blocks in those areas. We have said there is a bright new future for the Queensland Police Service in relation to technology and the way we go about policing. A lot of the structures will, I believe, be significantly different in the next 10, 20 to 30 years. But we have to ensure that we have the proper facilities in place.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** The reason I ask the question is that that is a significant site in the CBD of Nambour. With the courthouse, I am keen, be it this government or a future government, for there to be a major rebuilding of the police station. Perhaps it could be a combined police-courthouse facility as well. But I think that is for another day.

Minister, the Nambour Fire Station is on significant land that is currently leased at a peppercorn rent to the Sunshine Coast show society. Again, I am seeking assurances—and I am happy for it to be on notice—that there are no plans for that surplus land to be placed on the open market. At the moment it is surplus land, currently leased to the Sunshine Coast show society at a peppercorn rent.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. I will take that on notice. I have visited the site.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** It is a great site.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Yes, it is a great site. I did not realise how low that site next to the station was there. In saying that, I understand the significance and importance of that land, particularly to the show society and to the community. There are a number of groups in that area from car enthusiasts and other motor sport enthusiasts to the junior rugby league club. Everyone is keen to get more kids—I should not say kids; they are goats—but children into sports these days.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** You have certainly been well briefed, Minister.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I remember it because we had that beautiful drive up the Obi Obi Road that day. It gave me a great opportunity while I was there to look at other resources in that area.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I have one further question to the minister. It relates to the staffing of the Weapons Licensing Branch. I suppose it is in the context that we have recently had the amnesty for firearm registration and the handing in of firearms. Recently I received correspondence from one of my local sporting shooters associations concerned about staffing levels and resourcing. My question is, Minister: has there been any secondment of staff or transfer of staff to assist the current Weapons Licensing Branch to manage all the work that they have to do? If there has not, is there any planning to assist them with that backlog of work?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. It is an important question. Feverishly I get sheets of information put before me, good member. I have a great deal of interest in this area, because we had to bring in the toughest firearm laws in Australia and we had to do it in a way that we did not punish the legal firearm owners—the sporting shooters, the farmers or other persons who have a genuine need to have a firearm. So we set up the Ministerial Weapons Advisory Panel and that involved different representatives, including the Police Union, to discuss what we wanted to do in terms of advancements in the weapons licensing system as well as licensing as a whole. At the moment there are approximately over 650,000 firearms in Queensland and about 150,000 firearm owners.

The new system is processing around 23,000 firearms per month. It has been an outstanding success. In my first 12 months of becoming a minister I visited the weapons licensing section a number of times. I walked around every floor and spoke to each individual person who was working there, to listen to them about other ways that they can improve the weapons licensing section. At that time we had had an increase in staff there because we had planned ahead in relation to the large amount of interest that comes with simplifying the process. You can now apply for new licences online and pay through PayPal online. We have the highest standards in relation to obtaining a licence, so once you have achieved that—jumped through the hoops, crossed the t's and dotted the i's—other states have been able to process these applications in a matter of days and weeks, when previously some of these applications have taken many years to process. So that is important. Everyone knows the significance. Even with hundreds of thousands of applications, if we get it wrong once it can be to the detriment of the safety of one of our fellow Queenslanders. So it is very important that we do it right.

I meet regularly with the weapons advisory panel, as well as with the officer in charge and Inspector Craig Rolls. As far as staffing is concerned, we have increased staffing in that particular area. Commissioner, would you like to add to that as well?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr Wellington, for your question. This is an area where technology is going to resolve a lot of the backlog that we have had over time. Certainly we have actually seen increases in the number of applications since we went to online applications which is quite interesting when you think about it. Perhaps it is simply that people now see the ease of legally registering their firearms, and we are seeing the first rollout of that. But, as you also know, we recently undertook an amnesty. The government put in place a firearms amnesty, and that was between 1 February this year and 30 April this year. We saw a range of firearms come forward from people where perhaps their father or grandfather had had one in the back shed and they simply wanted to get rid of it.

But, in the main, 13,745 unregistered firearms were registered as a result of that amnesty, and that is an outstanding result when you think about those numbers. We are still finalising the numbers around that because people have come forward and they are still to make up their mind about whether to have the firearms destroyed or simply give them up or have them registered. We had 4,500 surrendered for destruction and there were also other firearms placed into safekeeping while owners' applications for registration are being processed, because there needs to be some significant work done around that.

You may know that Crime Stoppers have had a program in place since the end of the amnesty, tackling firearms crime. Again, I thank the government for the work in giving us the laws to do our job because we know how difficult it is to deal with firearm crime in this state and in fact across Australia.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Just to add to that to reiterate the success of that program, the previous amnesty collected approximately 10,000 firearms over a 12-month period. This amnesty collected over 19,000 firearms in a three-month period. And it did not just happen. If you think about the way

the government went about it, we introduced the legislation—the toughest laws—and we established the weapons advisory panel so that people who had a legitimate right to have firearms could have a voice, knowing that we would have the amnesty and for the commissioner and I, who regularly meet with other ministers from other states and territories, to align that with the federal program in relation to Crime Stoppers and so forth. Due to that success, I would certainly like to see some form of amnesty in the future.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** I have one last question in this section. Minister, it follows on from your recent visit to my electorate when we drove down the Obi Obi. Many people who have not driven off a bitumen road may not be game to drive down the Obi Obi. We drove down it and you inspected the site where the ambulances came to grief in the past. I want to say thank you for your involvement so that the ambulances can get back on the Obi Obi. That leads to the bigger question I put to you last year about the Kenilworth first responders and their workload and the pressure they are under. I am happy for you to take the question on notice. Can you have the Ambulance Service revisit the statistics and the postcode areas they service and review the call for greater support services for them at some stage in the future through ambulance officers, especially at peak holiday times? We are talking about a handful of volunteers who do amazing work that I think sometimes paid people take for granted—and I do not mean you.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for his question, and it is a very important question. In the next segment of this estimates hearing I will get the ambulance commissioner to comment as well. In relation to first responders, like you, I had the privilege of serving in the police force for nearly 20 years in remote and isolated communities. It takes a special person to be a first responder. They are required to get up at different times during the night and on weekends to go out on a volunteer basis and help their community. That is the type of volunteer we need to grasp and hold on to like a piece of gold for their importance. I have spoken previously to the commissioner about the first responders in that area. He will provide you with an answer to that in the next phase of the estimates.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Or you can take it on notice.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I am happy to take it on notice.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** The postcodes are critical.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** They certainly are, especially because your area is growing and also considering the overall model in relation to the Queensland Ambulance Service and other facilities. As I witnessed myself, it is certainly a very liveable area. I think a lot of Queenslanders are jealous of that particular area. We have to ensure we have the facilities in place.

**Mr BYRNE:** Just quickly, I have a question about the statistics that were estimated in the SDS at page 12 and your answer to question on notice No. 19. Similar to my concerns about the number of projected deaths and serious injuries due to accidents, the numbers associated with car theft seem to be put on paper in the same vein. I have the same sort of question. What additional resources are you going to provide or what approaches are you going to take to ensure that those estimated casualties do not actually occur and that we reduce the vehicle theft rate?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. They are obviously estimates and aspirational estimates. Before going any further, I point out that we have seen an increase in motor vehicle theft across a number of other states and territories. The Police Commissioner has also instigated a number of community awareness programs in relation to the securing of vehicles. No-one in this room or in the community would leave \$20,000 or \$30,000 lying on the bench before going to bed, yet we have seen that car keys have often been left out on verandas or in other places that are accessible, resulting in opportunistic crimes. I am not saying that all of them are opportunistic crimes, but there is a fair amount of ineptness in the community about protecting their vehicles. Those community programs certainly do assist.

The number of vehicles stolen between 2001 and 2013 actually decreased by 38 per cent. As we said, the rate of opportunistic theft has been reduced through vehicle immobilisation. I am also looking at opportunities in the private sector, which has a sales advantage in terms of advancements, relating to the installation of immobilisers in new vehicles. It is not in this brief, but I know that immobilisers cost around \$1,500 to supply and then around \$1,500 a year to monitor. If the private industry somehow increased its motivation, it may be able to reduce the cost, based on the number of vehicles with those particular devices fitted. I think the industry has many other ways in which it can step up to the mark in terms of the type of security they fit in vehicles.

Improved inspections, registration processes, information sharing with the department of transport and the insurance industry, and the reduction in insurance fraud over the years have also helped to reduce those statistics. We have to ensure that we work with all stakeholders, including the insurance industry. However, what is needed is not just a policing response to what can often be a blasé approach by people to protecting their vehicle. When I was in the police force, people would ask, 'Why do you get a fine for not securing your vehicle?' One could say it is harsh penalty. However, if a young child gets in that vehicle and takes off the handbrake and it goes down the hill, or if they start the engine and cause danger to someone else or if they hurt themselves in that particular vehicle, the community will then ask, 'What are the police doing about it?' That is why we are trying to encourage people to secure their vehicles. Commissioner, would you like to comment?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Thank you very much for the question, because it goes to the heart of some of the changes we have made in the Queensland Police Service such as our focus on borderless policing. Lines on maps do not mean anything to the crooks and so they should not mean anything to our police. We are certainly looking at having more police out there on the front line, where the public expects them to be. There is also the use of technology.

You may know—and forgive me if the minister mentioned it—that between 2000 and 2012-13 there was a reduction of 38 per cent in the number of vehicles stolen in the state. It is interesting that we saw a spike—an increase. Between 2011 and 2012 there was a 23 per cent increase in the number of motor vehicle thefts. We think the main reason for that is that the criminals have worked out that it is no good trying to overcome the car security systems that exist in modern vehicles; they simply go and steal the car keys. That is why we have run a number of education programs for the public, asking them simply to make their car keys less observable from outside their home. In fact, they should put them in places about which only they know. In the long term we will see through our evaluation how well those education programs have gone.

If I may, I would like to quote from the most recent National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council bulletin. They of course use statistics that come from right around Australia. They detail the statistics on passenger and light commercial vehicles and motorcycles stolen for short-term use. These are the joy-riders and the crooks who simply steal them to take a joy-ride or to use in a crime. The bulletin shows that in the January-March quarter of this year Queensland saw a seven per cent reduction in motor vehicle theft in that category, at 1,991, from the previous quarter. But, most importantly, compared to the same quarter in the previous year there was a reduction of 214. Obviously, while we have had this spike, we are starting to see some traction with the programs we are using.

I am very hopeful that technology will also help us to overcome some of the deficiencies in the security of vehicles. I know the minister talked about immobilisers, and some of the high-end vehicles already have remote kill switches. I can see that that will filter down through the industry over the coming years. That will assist us stopping people not just stealing vehicles but also using them dangerously, which is another part of the puzzle.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** To very quickly add to that, with the restructure of the Police Service we have obviously moved toward borderless policing. The breakdown of the divisions and districts means that the problem of offenders moving from one police area to another has been overcome. So having no borders certainly increases the effectiveness of police controlling these particular types of offences.

**Mr PUCCI:** I refer to page 3 of the SDS and the government's commitment to provide an extra 1,100 police officers over four years. This government has definitely demonstrated a commitment to Logan, with 71 new officers being provided for the Logan district, every police station being staffed by three to four police officers—more than when we were elected—a school based police officer for the Flagstone school and the myPolice blog coming to Logan. Can the minister outline what is being done to enhance policing services in the Torres Strait?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. I have had the opportunity to visit the Torres Strait on a number of occasions. The Torres Strait is a unique model. What I want, and what we are setting about achieving, is a unique policing model, because we have to involve particularly their culture, their family and that sense of ownership that each and every one of those special islands has. Besides the culture, it is a very religious area, and that is something that we need to ensure we embrace in a policing model. It is a very exciting area for policing going ahead.

The Queensland Police Service will expand its reach into the Torres Strait region by employing up to 36 Torres Strait Islands police support officers. In March 2013 I announced that for the first time police would take over responsibility for all law enforcement duties in the Torres Strait Islands under a staged approach. Previously it was looked after by the council. Most Queenslanders, particularly people in the Torres Strait, believe that policing is a state responsibility and we have accepted that.

The government approved community police officers will move from the Torres Strait Island Regional Council to the state government payroll system. The Queensland Police Service will continue to work with the Torres Strait Island Regional Council to identify how the QPS can assist in the future with the enforcement of local laws. Recurrent funding of \$2.6 million will be used to employ these officers from 1 October 2013. They will be renamed Torres Strait Islands Police Support Officers. The officers will wear QPS uniforms with epaulettes in the primary colours of the Torres Strait: bright green with two bands of light blue and white.

The extensive geographic area of the Torres Strait makes it challenging to efficiently and effectively police, as we noticed with the tragic occurrence on the seas in the Papua New Guinean waters recently. These support officers will give QPS officers the eyes and ears they need on the ground as well as important police contact for island residents. The support officers will play an important role in helping police with language and cultural barriers as well as provide intelligence, situation reports in emergencies, help with search-and-rescue operations, and advice on how community issues and incidents can be resolved. They will also be trained to take reports and educate the community about crime prevention and safety techniques. The Torres Strait Islands Police Support Officers will undertake ongoing Queensland Police Service training as part of their role. I will be formally launching the new role of the Torres Strait Islands police support officers later this year.

Policing in the Torres Strait is also being enhanced by using the Britten-Norman Islander police aircraft as a transport platform for officers stationed on Horn Island as well as Thursday Island. In addition, the 22-metre police vessel *William Conroy* is acting as a patrolling and policing platform. Between eight and 10 officers will board the vessel for a seven-day period in that area every second week. There are also two police stations in the Torres Strait—on Thursday and Horn islands—and I have visited both on a number of occasions. Seventeen uniformed officers are based on Thursday Island and they are supported by eight plainclothes officers, five water police, a prosecutor, an intelligence officer and a Cultural Liaison Officer.

Three police liaison officers are stationed at Thursday Island to support the police station. Horn Island station has two permanent officers assisted by a senior police liaison officer, and five Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander police officers are stationed on Badu Island. The general duties officers are supported by specialist units, including the Criminal Investigation Branch, Child Protection Investigation Unit, Tactical Crime Squad and the regional dog squad. State Crime Command and Operations Support Command also provide specialist resources when needed.

I would just also like to emphasise the enthusiasm with which the local community has embraced this initiative. For the first time we have a Torres Strait inspector actually stationed in the Torres Strait. Prior to this time the officer was based in the Cairns area. Over the last 12 to 18 months we have worked on number of things, particularly in the Cairns area, and I think people appreciate the fact we have an officer who is now based in the Torres Strait rather than giving direction from a distant city many miles down the coast.

**CHAIR:** Judge Manus Boyce, chair of the Prostitution Licensing Authority, if I might give you the imprimatur, you may leave. We have looked at the committee's questions, and we do not have one for you. I am so sorry for that, but you might just be able to beat the traffic home. Or perhaps not.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Just before the good judge leaves, that section is of great importance for the health and safety of that particular industry. It also assists people who work in that particular area and ensures that we have openness and transparency. There is more work to be done. The judge and I have spoken about that on a number of occasions. We look forward to possible changes in legislation, particularly in the area of certain types of advertising and how a number of different industries avail themselves of business opportunities to the detriment of people who work in that industry. We have to keep ahead of that, and that is what we will be working towards. I look forward to having legislation brought before the cabinet in the future.

**CHAIR:** It is only an observation from me, but I understand the issue is that for legal operators it is too difficult to make a profit when you have illegal operators out there. That is another issue for another day, and I do not think we can do too much about that today.



With the minister's imprimatur as well, Judge, I do not think there is any necessity for you to continue to stay. Enjoy the rest of your day.

**Mr PUCCI:** Minister, as you know from your many visits, road safety is also a concern for the residents of Logan. Reference is made on page 3 of the SDS to \$26.6 million in additional operating costs and \$2.9 million in additional capital funding to support the continued deployment of mobile and fixed speed and red-light cameras throughout Queensland. You mentioned road safety measures earlier in another question. Can the minister please outline what else the Queensland Police Service is doing to reduce road trauma and improve road safety.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a passionate area for me as the police minister, having experienced many tragedies in this particular area myself, and the Queensland Police Service is also similarly passionate about the issue of road safety. In 2012 the road toll was 280, or 6.14 per 100,000 people, as the good member for Rockhampton alluded to. This was the third lowest figure ever recorded in Queensland's history. That gets back to the fact of the peaks and troughs which the commissioner alluded to and the need to have initiatives in place to try and reduce these terrible statistics. At that time there were 27 fewer fatalities than the average number for the previous five years from 2007-2011. As at midnight of 17 July the Queensland road toll stood at 162, which is 19 more deaths on our roads. If we can save the life of one Queenslanders, it will certainly be a blessing.

On 4 June the Queensland Road Safety Action Plan was launched. This action plan outlines about how the government will make Queensland's roads safer over the next two years. As the chairman alluded to, that was signed in conjunction with the police and the minister for transport. We want to ensure that we no longer have government agencies working in silos, but together to reduce these horrific incidents.

That is why we are also reducing the speed tolerance across all speed detection devices. These changes to speed tolerances will be incremental over time. I thank the commissioner for bringing that forward. They will be guided by evidence such as the road toll, public compliance with speed limits and level of speed tolerance. That is obviously a matter for the commissioner. As I stated to the media today, the speed limit is the maximum; it is not a guide. It is not a recommendation. If road users obey the speed limit, they will not receive a ticket. It is quite simple. People have to make a conscious choice in relation to the fatal five. They have to make a conscious choice to speed, to not wear a seatbelt, to take alcohol or drugs, to talk on a mobile phone or to drive that little bit further when tired and put their lives and others' at risk. We ask all road users to please make the right choice for the sake of all Queenslanders.

Also as of 1 July 2013 the Queensland Police Service began publishing speed camera locations throughout Queensland via the police website [www.police.qld.gov.au](http://www.police.qld.gov.au). I am very surprised that to date there has been no app developed, because those sites are freely available to all Queenslanders.

In April 2013 the government passed the country's toughest antihooning legislation. These laws will come into effect in November this year. This will allow time for public education regarding the new penalties, as requested by the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. The new penalties will see people who commit two serious hooning offences in five years having their cars confiscated indefinitely. The two strikes approach will apply to those committing type 1 offences. When we think of the offences of dangerous operation of a motor vehicle, racing and speed trials on the roads, wilfully starting a motor vehicle or driving a motor vehicle in a way that makes unnecessary noise with smoke—that is like the drifters and so forth—and evading police, we had to ensure that we had those particular offences in there because from the information that we have in relation to police pursuits, there must be severe penalties. The evading police legislation, hooning legislation, new technologies, helicopters, borderless policing—it is all part of the puzzle to be able to make sure that our officers and Queensland road users are safe. Quite frankly, Queenslanders are fed up with dangerous hooning on our public roads, and police will now have the tools to put the brakes on hoons.

Members of the public can obviously contribute to the hoon hotline. Over 18,000 calls from the public have been answered since 8 June this year alone. We are also continuing to ensure that drivers do not break the road rules. In relation to RBTs, the idea is that police will have more contact with people out on the road and not necessarily have a particular mobile device which people drive past. There was an article in the paper today which showed that the number of speeding offences had increased. It was a balanced article because it demonstrated that enforcement had increased by approximately 150 hours, which just shows that having more officers out there enforcing the road rules is actually working.

Regarding the fatal five, inattention is a factor particularly with people who have mobile phones and other distractions in their vehicles. The QPS also started a trial of 12 mobile automatic number plate recognition devices in March of this year. These 12 mobile ANPR devices are used across the state for traffic enforcement purposes only at the current time. We were investigating whether we can advance that into other criminal activities. When the devices detect vehicles of interest, they provide alerts to police. When police then intercept the suspicious vehicle, they take the necessary action. It helps to identify drivers who are committing offences, reduce dangerous driving, identify unregistered and uninsured vehicles and reduce injuries and deaths on the road. In the first 15 months—another significant outcome of this operation—the 12 trial ANPR trial devices monitored over 8.3 million vehicle number plates. This is quite significant. It is a significant number when you think of the type of technology that we now have in these vehicles. That resulted in 258,618 alerts to police for potential offences; nearly 3,000 notices to appear; nearly 11,000 traffic offence notices; and 272 vehicles were impounded under the antihooning legislation. Approval has been received to extend the trial until March next year. It is a significant increase in technology. As you can imagine, this type of device can be set up anywhere at all on our highways and byways. But again it is only as good as the community that assists it, and I would prefer that we did not have to issue one traffic offence.

**CHAIR:** Commissioner, would you like to add anything?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Thank you for the question, sir. Road safety, as I said earlier in the committee hearing today, is a very, very critical factor in keeping the community safe here in Queensland. We take it very, very seriously. I may not have mentioned this earlier, but part of the restructure was the creation of a Road Policing Command here in Queensland. This is the first time we have had such a command in more than 20 years in terms of being specifically focused on one thing, and that is making the roads safer here in Queensland. We are centralising the command structure right across the state. That does not mean a reduction in the number of traffic officers anywhere in the state; in fact, it is designed to allow them to have more time out on the road.

As the minister said, there was an article in today's paper indicating how, compared to the same time last year, we had more speeding tickets issued by cameras, but that was in line with the fact that we had more hours of policing camera work out there to achieve that.

I agree that whilst we only form one part of the trilogy that acts on road safety—engineering, education and enforcement—whilst we are the enforcement component, we are doing everything we can to send a very strong message through the proactive, educational side of it that no-one needs to get a ticket. In fact, today someone said that enforcement is about user pays, so if you speed you are going to get a ticket and you are going to pay. That is the way it is. You do not have to get that ticket if you do not break the law and speed. I would ask all members of the community to recognise that fact and to drive to conditions and the road laws. I do not think there is anything else, sir.

**Mr PUCCI:** In regards to the trilogy about education, engineering and policing, I think there is a fourth thing we need to add to that: personal responsibility. I think the public out there need to take a little more responsibility for driving safely.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** That is very insightful, member for Logan. Minister, page 9 of the SDS refers to continued installation of the automated public inquiry devices, the touch screens that you have at the police shopfronts around Brisbane. Would you please explain to the committee how these devices are helping to reduce red tape for police and, equally importantly, the community.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The Queensland Police Service is committed to reducing unnecessary regulation for the public. This, as we all know, is called red tape. The service is also streamlining internal processes to reduce blue tape. That legislation will be before the House shortly. It is due to go through cabinet in the coming month.

This allows police to spend less time doing paperwork and more time on the front line. The automated public assistance devices, or APADs, provide a quick and easy alternative for members of the public to access information at a police beat shopfront if the police officers are unavailable. We want police officers from the police beats out and about, but the community still has to have access to information.

The APADs are a 19-inch touchscreen device. The screen is fitted to the interior of the police shopfront window but can be operated from the outside. This allows the public to access information when the office is unattended, and obviously for certain reasons the police might have to go out.

Information available through the APADs includes how to contact police in an emergency, Policelink contacts, the reporting of minor crimes as well as the use of the hoon hotline, and we see that particularly in and around shopping centres. The APADs also provide access to general information on public safety as well as the law overall.

The APAD pilot project is currently running in the North Brisbane district, or the former Metropolitan North region, with funding provided for nine screens installed in the district's eight police beat shopfronts and an additional screen at Westfield North Lakes Shopping Centre. They have been rolled out to Adelaide Street in the city, Toombul, Indooroopilly, Chermside, Aspley, Strathpine and Brookside—across a vast area. Plans are in place to install the devices in Milton and, as I said previously, the Westfield North Lakes Shopping Centre by the end of July 2013. This gives people some vital information. People do not often attend stations when they are in calm or normal situations; they are there for assistance and help, often in a crisis situation. The success of these devices will be evaluated later this year and at that point the service will consider the desirability of rolling out additional devices at other locations.

The APADs are only one of a number of other red-tape reduction initiatives that the QPS has introduced. Other initiatives implemented to assist in reducing red tape for police and the public include: developing the new weapons licensing system, which enables clients to submit and pay; making weapons licensing photographs valid for 10 years, not three years as they previously were, so that people no longer have to get to those counters at police stations; extending the licence period for legitimate gun owners; allowing the public to withdraw a property crime complaint through Policelink rather than attending a police station; providing direct access for members of the public to current crime statistics; and allowing people to register their parties online. Other significant ones are reducing the wide-load permit application from multiple forms to one form, amending police legislation to achieve efficiencies and making police operational procedures available on the QPS internet site. With those technologies we are trying to open up the parameters.

Members of the Police Service are a very resourceful group; they are very much problem solvers. I look forward to even more blue-tape reductions coming before the parliament in the future. I will not hint at what those blue-tape reductions are, but one of them is around noise complaints. I look forward, as do probably many other members in the House, to seeing how that is going to be dealt with to assist local communities with noise legislation.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Rockhampton.

**Mr BYRNE:** Minister, I want to talk about the Gold Coast. The SDS at page 7 talks about additional staffing. We heard the Premier comment earlier at estimates, but he only wanted to talk about net increases of staff. I am asking whether the Premier was accurate in that when he was recently questioned about a Gold Coast crime summit he said that the QPS had employed an extra 130 police on the Gold Coast. I then noted that a senior police officer on 7 July this year said that there were around 60 extra police. I am just wondering what the actual number is today in terms of additional police officers serving on the Gold Coast.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. A couple of days ago I met with Mayor Tate on the ground, as I have done previously with the mayors of Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and a few other places, to discuss ways to keep their communities safe. I am happy to get the exact numbers, but our election commitment was 100 officers for the south-east within four years. We achieved 131 officers in the first year, which is a significant number. That is because the government made a commitment to 1,100 new police officers over the next four years, including returning 200 police officers from non-operational duties to operational duties and the further fact that the restructure has seen 86 commissioned officers now going down into front-line services.

The other day I was speaking with Assistant Commissioner Graham Rynders and his senior executive officers. We have seen a large number of officers going to the Logan area in particular because of the regrouping together of Gold Coast, Coomera and Logan. That is where we get that significant large number from, and in a moment I will pass to the commissioner to go through some of the details in relation to that.

In terms of violence on the Gold Coast, this government acknowledges the issues of crime in that area. We make no apologies for that. During the election we made a commitment to be tough on crime and to ensure that we gave police the resources they need. That is why we have changed pieces of legislation. We have made sure there are additional staff in place and there are helicopters in the skies over the Gold Coast, and that will increase by another one to service South-East Queensland in the future. I ask the commissioner to comment.

**Commissioner Stewart:** Thank you, Minister. Mr Byrne, thank you for the question. The growth in the 2012-13 year for the south-east region—so that is the new Gold Coast district and Logan district—was a total of 137 personnel. The key issue, though, is the fact that, with the restructure, you know that previously we had the Gold Coast, Coomera and Logan. We have combined those back together so that we could actually release more police back out on the street and have more boundary-less policing. We believe that through the use of these extra police who have been put into the south-east region plus our new tactics, which focus very directly on front-line policing and task force policing, we will be able to get greatest effect—greatest bang for the buck—out of every one of these extra officers who are in that area.

**Mr BYRNE:** So in terms of that number on the Gold Coast, can you just run that number again? What is it?

**Commissioner Stewart:** There is a total of 137 out of the 300 growth for the last financial or statistical year—that is, 2012-13—and out of that 300 a total of 137 went to the south-east region in total.

**Mr BYRNE:** Thanks, Commissioner. Minister, I go back to the SDS at page 8. Following the ABC's 7.30 program of 10 July about bikie violence on the Gold Coast—which effectively is a nine-minute ad about why families should not holiday on the Gold Coast—and numerous national newspaper stories about crime on the Gold Coast, is it not time to organise a crime summit with the people of the Gold Coast and tell people what your plan is going to be in a general sense moving forward to sort out the problems on the Gold Coast?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. It is an important question, and that is why I just recently visited the mayor—to look at positive ways in relation to reducing the fear of crime. The commissioner and the Police Service will have a lot of statistics to show that the numbers of occurrences are actually being solved in a very timely manner. But we certainly do not step away, as I said in my previous answer, from the fact that there are certain elements in place. We have made sure that we have put extra police officers on the beat three years ahead of our schedule. We have made sure that we have reduced the red tape and bureaucracy so that police officers can get out and do their duties.

A particular motorcycle gang, the Finks, is before the court, although I will not comment in relation to that. That is done under legislation brought in by the previous government that they never used. We have been making sure that we use every aspect to ensure that we bring perpetrators to justice. We have that particular outlaw motorcycle gang before the courts. The Attorney-General has brought in the unexplained wealth legislation and plans to strengthen those laws in the future in relation to dealing with unexplained wealth. Whether it be illegal motorcycle gangs or illegal gang activities, they thrive on money. Whether it be drugs or other stolen property, it is money based. We have to ensure that we get to the assets in that regard.

Whilst we recognise that there are outlaw motorcycle gang issues in that particular area, we are not stepping away from it. We are getting on top of it. We made sure that we put on an extra 15 officers with special task force qualities. That has supplemented the 10 other officers in previous organised crime branches in those particular areas, and we will continue to ensure that we arrest the associates involved.

To give you some figures, between January 2012 and May 2013, 402 outlaw motorcycle gang members, ex-members and associates have been arrested, with over 1,083 charges. That is a significant number in one particular area. Police are on it. They need the support of the community. We have a great community down there. But, as the Premier alluded to, it is not what you wear and it is not the tattoo you have on your body; it is what you do. If you carry out any illegal activities, you will be caught—no matter where you are in the whole of Queensland. I make no apologies for being tough on that.

The legislation in place relating to unexplained wealth, the increased police, the helicopters—these are all long-term strategies so that people can experience the beautiful Gold Coast lifestyle. With regard to words and talkfests and so forth, we will get on with the job. We will make sure that as a government we turn those particular endeavours into actions. We are doing that. We are manifesting that by the overt act of simply supplying more officers, changing legislation and getting on with the job.

We know what we need to do. We have highly experienced officers down there. We are engaging with the local community and we are looking at modern ways to engage the Gold Coast community. Earlier I spoke about the myPolice blogs. The one for the Gold Coast has over 54 pages. It is a community that is increasing Neighbourhood Watch groups. Motorcycle gang operations did not just move in in the last 12 months; they have been endemic in those particular areas.

I want to make sure that I get all of them. I have been very thorough in the apprehension of criminals in past experiences, and I want to make sure that no-one gets away from the Police Service net. We will use whatever intelligence procedures we can. For example, we have cross-border operations with New South Wales. I meet regularly with all of the other state and territory ministers. We liaise as well in relation to the intelligence base of the Federal Police. We have had an operation set up in Brisbane recently. I am also trying to put an emphasis back onto the Australian Federal Police in relation to their site on the Gold Coast. I will work with whatever federal government ministers or assistant ministers are currently in place to have some form of representation of the AFP back on the Gold Coast. In that regard, the Gold Coast has a significant airport now. There could be significant customs issues. Significant intelligence is always gathered in relation to not just the upfront motorcycle gangs, with the jackets and the tattoos, but also the people behind them doing the business, and they are the ones we want to break.

**Mr BYRNE:** This dovetails nicely to the next point I want to make. You have mentioned bikie associates and the numbers that the police have dealt with over a period. I have trouble understanding exactly what the definition of a bikie associate is. I know there are such things as feeder clubs and other semi-organised gangs that are feeding into this. Just how many coloured clubs exist on the Gold Coast? How many people constitute the mass that is either members or associates? Without panicking the punters out there, what are we dealing with in terms of size?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. Obviously, we are not looking at the Malvern Star recreational riders association here. These are people who have some significant attachment to these particular areas. It is also evidence based. As I said in answer to the previous question, it is not what they wear; it is what they do. It is the intel gathering to be able to ensure that we strike at the heart of these people, we strike at the heart of their assets and the money that they are laundering into other operations. I can tell you from past experiences that a lot of these people are quite, for want of a better word, the average punter in the street. They certainly are able to slip under the radar. So we want to make sure that none of them escape the loop. For further clarity, I would ask the commissioner to please make comments in relation to this matter.

**Commissioner Stewart:** Thanks, Minister, for that. Mr Byrne, thank you for the question. I would identify, though, that we are starting to get into areas of operational intelligence. I can say with hand on heart—

**Mr BYRNE:** I am happy for you not to represent it here then for the public domain if it compromises anything. But I would not mind knowing at some point what we are dealing with in broad terms.

**Commissioner Stewart:** Certainly, sir. I am sure that if you made representations to the minister we would be comfortable in giving you a briefing on that.

**Mr BYRNE:** I am more than happy with that.

**Commissioner Stewart:** But what I would say—and thank you for the question because it is an important one for the whole of Queensland but, more importantly, for the Gold Coast—we do not want any bikie clubs on the Gold Coast. Thank you.

**Mr BYRNE:** This may be one moment of political harmony—not that that is going to last long around here.

**Miss BARTON:** Can I just say very briefly, member for Rockhampton, that as a member of parliament from the Gold Coast the community feedback that I have been receiving has been overwhelmingly supportive of the efforts that the QPS have been making in terms of the increased presence on the Gold Coast—even the officers just being on the street more. It has been very well received by the Gold Coast community and that has been funnelled back to us.

**Mr BYRNE:** I have one more about the matters of bikies. We know the journey that the state has been on with the Finks outlaw motorcycle group. We know the legislation that has been put in place—and I might add that that legislation was heavily criticised by the previous opposition, now the government. But that is a matter of history. I am just wondering what advice the minister may have

received and what additional resources or thought has been required to target these other gangs or groups that might seek to fill the voids left by the Finks once proceedings are concluded against the Finks and, hopefully, all of our desires are met. Surely, there is that typical void and potentially friction associated with that void. Is that something that the service is aware of? Are there thoughts being placed towards that?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** It certainly is. Whilst, as the commissioner alluded to, a lot of that is intel based and there is currently a number of operations, the fact remains that it gets back to that symbolic thing. You cannot charge someone for wearing certain colours and being tattooed and having a cup of coffee in a restaurant. They have to commit a certain criminal activity. That is why we have to ensure that we have the available resources first in the reactive stage but also in the proactive stage to ensure that we have that intel data. Many of these people go across a broad spectrum of different vocations. They are international networks. They are not just grown from criminals here locally. They have the overall intent of gaining money from the despair of many Queenslanders. Commissioner, would you like to make any comment?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Mr Byrne, thank you for your question. To assist also I would just point out that, since the High Court brought down its unanimous decision to reject the Finks challenge to the Queensland legislation in March of this year, the Supreme Court of Queensland is hoping to have the trial, which will occur early in 2014, regarding the declaration of the Finks club as a declared criminal organisation. We are looking forward to that trial and, hopefully, to a positive outcome.

We certainly have taken into account what that might mean for the future in terms of the number of staff necessary to proceed against other of these clubs that are involved in criminal activity and violence. As you know, Task Force Hydra spearheads our strategies against gangs in Queensland. That is a group that is based in Brisbane and they are the ones in the main, with support from the local areas where these gangs exist, that have taken the work forward. We will be looking at how Hydra will be staffed to deal with those sorts of issues into the future. But it certainly is not something that we just leave to a local criminal investigation branch. That would not be the best use of our resources. Again, it comes down to how our system within the Queensland Police Service of providing support from specialist areas into regional and local policing occurs on a day-to-day basis.

**Mr BYRNE:** I understand that I have one last question. The issue of the 150 officers in Papua New Guinea has been initially discussed and negotiated by the Premier. This is an amalgam question. Have any of the senior officers present lived or worked in Papua New Guinea for any length of time? How far progressed is the proposal? What level of collaboration is there with the Federal Police, given the commitments given by the federal government recently?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. It is an important question. It is important to note, right from the initial stages without going into some more detail, which the commissioner will go to, that since the announcement with the Papua New Guinea Prime Minister and the Premier that we have engaged in conversation with the executive members of the Papua New Guinean government. Myself and the commissioner and other representatives of the Queensland Police Service have had meetings with the Papua New Guinea Prime Minister and other ministers in Townsville in relation to this matter to obviously start to go through the many complex issues that are quite achievable and will be achieved in the coming months.

I have also, from that meeting, had representatives of the Papua New Guinea government come here and visit this government and myself here in Brisbane across a variety of issues—not from officers of the Queensland Police Service going there and to training here but other portfolios in relation to how we can assist in correctional services, how we can assist them in disaster management and with the fire service and the Queensland Ambulance Service. They are the nearest country that we have on our border here. It is incumbent to make sure that we go a considerable way to make sure that not only there is a safe community in Papua New Guinea but also that we further advance the safety of our borders and the people here in Queensland.

I will say as well that, through these negotiations, we quite clearly understand that police officers will ensure that the highest level of safety comes first. There are a number of issues that we will work through in relation to the safety of our officers. Be assured that there will be no cost to the Queensland taxpayers in relation to this particular issue going forward. Also, in relation to the training of the officers—and the commissioner will go into a bit more detail here as well—we will have officers going to Papua New Guinea. We will also be having officers who are picked from the Papua New Guinea Constabulary coming to Queensland and doing training at our academies to increase the standard and the ethical approach to policing per se within their particular communities.

So it is an exciting time. Please bear in mind as well that members of the Queensland Police Service have already given overseas service, whether that be in the Solomons, Timor, in Cyprus and in other overseas areas. These officers have brought a great deal of skills as well as life experiences back to the Queensland Police Service. So there is a sharing. There is a great opportunity to enhance the relationship with Papua New Guinea. We will certainly make sure that that is achieved in the future, bearing in mind the safety of our officers and that it will be at no cost to the Queensland taxpayer. Are there any other particular things?

**Mr BYRNE:** No, that will do.

**Commissioner Stewart:** Thanks, Minister. Mr Byrne again, thank you for what is a very important question. You asked three specific questions. I cannot answer for my colleagues but I have never lived or worked in Papua New Guinea. I am about to visit there with the minister at the end of this month and the planning for that is very much underway. But I would point out that, as the minister did allude to, we have had many officers work internationally now and we will use their experiences plus we are getting advice from a range of areas on the sorts of issues that we will need to take cognisance of for our officers to work in Papua New Guinea in safety, which is, of course, a critical factor, as the minister said.

It is a great opportunity and we have had planning in place basically since the day of the announcement. The officer in charge of that planning is the assistant commissioner of the Ethical Standards Command who has been in Papua New Guinea previously. He does know that area. In fact, he was explaining to me about walking the Kokoda trail just recently. Sorry, he walked it a couple of years ago but he recently was explaining to me some of the issues that will face our officers. So we have someone with good knowledge heading up the planning team.

It is a two-way exchange. The concept is that over time 150 of our officers will serve in Papua New Guinea and at the same time we will see 150 Papua New Guinean officers come to Queensland. I would add that we have a very strong history of training with the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary. From time to time we have trained their officers and, in fact, I can remember almost over 20 years ago two officers came and trained in the unit that I was leading at the time. That has continued. Probably the most recent example would be officers from the RPNGC dog squad coming and training with our people here in Queensland. I know that in other areas of the minister's portfolio there is also a strong history and a strong relationship with other agencies in Papua New Guinea. So the planning is taking place and we are working in a whole-of-government environment. There is a steering committee at a whole-of-government level and we have a seat on that steering committee, for which we are very grateful.

The third question you asked was our involvement with the federal government in relation to the organisation of this. The Australian Federal Police has a long history in the management of overseas deployments. They have been doing it for many years and we have contributed to that, as I said earlier. We have already been to the Australian Federal Police to learn from them. They are being very open and are providing assistance already to us to understand the sorts of issues that we will be facing. So I hope that answers your question.

**Mr BYRNE:** Yes.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Just to add to that, though, over a period of time, even before this initial approach, as the commissioner alluded to, there have been a number of operations with the Queensland Police Service with officers going to Papua New Guinea under a different models, mainly under the Australian Federal Police model. So we are quite aware of the different models, but we are looking at not only the best opportunities for those officers but also the best opportunities for the benefit of Queensland and the benefit and safety of Papua New Guinea, particularly in the Port Moresby area.

**CHAIR:** It is worth noting that I think the Queensland border extends to about 10 kilometres from the mainland of New Guinea. So we are closer than most people think.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Certainly. With the Torres Strait Islander Police Support Officers who will be coming on line, it is obviously very important for that particular area. Vessel usage and so forth is increasing there. I just want to say that policing in Queensland in no way will be compromised; it will only be value-added.

**CHAIR:** The committee will now break for dinner. The hearing will resume at 7 pm with the continued consideration of the proposed expenditure for the relevant organisation within the Corrective Services and Emergency Services portfolio of the Minister for Police and Community Safety. Minister, Commissioner and advisers, thank you for giving up your time to be with us today and to help us in the process. In saying that, do you want to make a closing remark?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** In closing, I would like to thank the commissioner and all the deputy commissioners and assistant commissioners and, obviously, Angus here as well, who is very good in relation to his task that is put before him. I also thank the members of Hansard for their recording. I know sometimes it is very hard to get the message out in an understandable way. I thank everyone for their attendance and their patience.

**Proceedings suspended from 6.16 pm to 7.00 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, do you wish to provide additional information for the Community Safety portfolio?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. It is a great privilege to say a few words in relation to the important portfolio of the Department of Community Safety and particularly the agencies that come under that overarching portfolio. Mr Chairman and members of the committee, you only have to look at the past 12 months to see the invaluable contribution made by every member of the Department of Community Safety. Ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald delivered a payload of destruction unlike anything that this state has experienced in decades. Usually with cyclones and floods it is focused on a definable geographical region, such as with cyclones Yasi and Larry which inflicted devastation on Tully and Innisfail in North Queensland, whereas Oswald bucked all trends. It threatened the coast when it turned into a depression, bringing with it indiscriminate waves of flooding, severe winds and, in my home town of Bundaberg, tornadoes. Of course, it was not just the Bundaberg region that was affected, it was Rockhampton, Gladstone, Mackay, Gympie, Brisbane to name just a few of those centres that were affected by this weather event.

While Oswald became unpredictable, the dedication of the staff in the Department of Community Safety certainly did not. The department's 40,000 volunteers and nearly 11,000 paid staff were rock solid, carrying out their duties with professionalism and compassion and with swift textbook precision in all of their operations. No-one's commitment wavered and this was especially evident during Australia's largest air evacuation of over a thousand people who were rapidly evacuated from North Bundaberg due to the rising floodwaters. This event alone was a mammoth coordination task between police, firefighters, paramedics, EMQ volunteers and, of course, our air crews, and is something that will be burnt in the minds of Queenslanders for many generations to come. As the minister and member for Bundaberg I was immensely proud but as a human being I was simply in awe. It was outstanding. For my community and many other communities it was amazing to know that as individuals they were not alone, that the rest of Queensland had come to help them in their time of need.

But of course this department is not just about keeping the community safe in times of disaster and emergencies. We also have a hardworking corrections staff charged with managing approximately 6,000 offenders around this great state. Managing some of the country's most notorious prisoners can be a difficult job, but again, just as our firefighters and paramedics carry out their jobs with distinction, so do our corrections officers and their support teams.

This is a very large and diversified department with a 2013-14 operational budget of over \$1.9 billion. Within this budget we have many highlights to continue supporting and further expanding the reach and capabilities of our staff. They include \$51.5 million for ambulance facilities and 155 new ambulance vehicles; \$46.4 million for fire and rescue facilities, urban and rural fire appliances, operational and communications equipment and information systems; \$40.5 million for post-occupancy work, cell upgrades, probation and parole office accommodation, property and plant equipment; \$6.4 million to complete the redevelopment of the Spring Hill complex and ambulance station; \$3.1 million to deliver the community campaigns to improve community actions to prepare for disasters—and I look forward to launching that with the department in coming months because that will be a great way of bringing all Queenslanders together and prepared in a united action against devastation; and \$4.4 million in capital grants to support the SES. This is a government committed to front-line services for the people of Queensland. Just as we continued recruiting additional



paramedics, police officers and firefighters last year, we will continue investing in our front lines to ensure that when there is an emergency Queenslanders can be attended to in a timely and professional manner.

I thank every member of the department for their commitment to the people of Queensland. To the paramedics who carry out tasks that just a few years ago were performed in hospital emergency wards, to the firies who undertake everything from dousing structure fires to swift water rescues, to our chopper crews and volunteers with EMQ for rescues en masse, and to our corrections staff who keep the doors closed on many people who pose a risk to our community and its values, I thank you on behalf of the entire Queensland community and those who visit this great state regularly. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR:** Member for Broadwater?

**Miss BARTON:** Thank you very much, Mr Chair. Minister, I refer you to page 3 of the SDS which highlights the emergency management fire and rescue levy. How will the new emergency management fire and rescue levy go towards providing a sustainable funding base for our emergency services?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question and I also note and thank her for her continued support for emergency services in her electorate of Broadwater and for the encouragement that she gives to those officers in the way they interact with the community. First of all, the words that come with this levy are 'a sustainable and secure funding model'. That is what this funding model is predominantly about. One of the key objectives of the government is to deliver cost effective fire and rescue and emergency services to the people of Queensland. Over the last few years in particular we have experienced firsthand the need for well resourced emergency services. The floods, as I said in my opening statement, at Bundaberg and throughout the central region this year, as well as the Brisbane, Ipswich, Toowoomba and Lockyer Valley catastrophic flood events and Tropical Cyclone Yasi in 2011 are cases in point. We cannot forget either that in parts of the state through November and December last year there were actually widespread and intense bushfires going on while we had these flood events. At some time or another most Queenslanders benefit from the incredible work performed by our emergency services. These services are provided in every corner of our state and include the urban and rural fire services, rescue services, including road accidents, swift water and other forms of technical rescue, helicopter rescue services, the State Emergency Service, Disaster Management services, including planning and preparation, monitoring of risks and warnings, coordination of disaster response arrangements such as evacuations, damage assessments and resupplies and support for volunteer marine coast guard and other organisations. The reality is that the equipment needed and the expertise involved with emergency management has grown significantly over time.

In 2013-14 the estimated cost of providing emergency management fire and rescue services delivered by the Department of Community Safety is \$643.2 million. We are committed to continue to provide the best emergency services state-wide. That is why as of 1 July 2013 the urban fire levy, as it was previously known, has been refocused as the emergency management fire and rescue levy. From 1 January next year—2014—the levy will increase by 6.5 per cent and its coverage will be broadened to all rateable properties. This is to ensure a more sustainable funding base for emergency services. It is important to note that the levy will not cover the full cost of delivering emergency and disaster services to the people of this great state. The Queensland government will still contribute significantly to service delivery costs. In fact, the levy will only fund approximately 60 per cent of the operational costs of the services that the state provides. This is because in 2013-14 the estimated cost to the Department of Community Safety of providing emergency management fire and rescue services to the people of Queensland is, as I said before, \$643.2 million. The levy is designed to ensure funding for emergency services is more sustainable in the longer term and the cost to provide these services is shared equally across the state. Thank you, member.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** I have a follow up question if I may?

**CHAIR:** Yes, member for Bulimba?

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Minister, in regards to the new emergency management fire and rescue levy, can you please explain the impact this will have on the rural fire service in council areas that choose to cease charging the current rural fire service levy?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. It is important because there are many families of volunteer firefighters in his own electorate who know the importance of volunteerism, particularly in rural fire services, where we have over 35,000 members. It is a phenomenal

organisation. The levy amount is determined in accordance with the Fire and Rescue Service Regulation 2011 which establishes a schedule of property types and classes of levy groups on which the levy amount is based. The levy is structured in a way that recognises service delivery in rural and regional areas, with the lowest fees charged to those who currently receive auxiliary or rural fire services. We recognise that many Queenslanders in rural and regional areas already contribute their time and their effort to the protection of their communities. Exemptions from the levy under the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 will continue to apply for Crown land and properties vested in the Aboriginal and Islander Affairs Cooperation. The current 20 per cent discount for eligible pensioners will still continue. Additional new arrangements have been put in place whereby farming properties with one owner compromised of more than one lot and where those lots share a common boundary or are contiguous will have one levy applied to the whole of the property. If owners disagree with the levy applied to their property they are able to appeal to the chief executive of the Department of Community Safety.

In relation to your question and local government collection, the levy will continue to be a state government charge which is collected by local governments. As you would be aware, many local governments already collect a levy on behalf of the government as part of their rates collection. For the period 1 July 2013 to 31 December this year, local governments that previously collected the urban fire levy will continue to collect the expanded levy. From 1 January next year an additional 11 local governments will also be collecting the levy. Four of the additional local governments will be the deamalgamated councils of Noosa, Livingstone, Douglas and Mareeba. Seven existing local governments have not previously collected the levy. These are Diamantina, Etheridge, Bulloo, Burke, Carpentaria, Croydon and Barcoo. Local governments will continue to receive an administration fee to collect the levy. This fee is calculated in accordance with the Fire and Rescue Service Regulation 2011 and that is approximately \$3.35 per property in larger areas where there is up to 40,000 properties and \$2.80 per property thereafter. Local governments are also being provided with transitional assistance to help with the smooth implementation of the new levy arrangements. I would like to compliment the work that Deputy Director-General Gary Mahon and members of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service have been doing in liaising with the Local Government Association in particular and the rates department of each council to ensure a smooth and positive transition in those particular areas.

As members of the committee would be aware, rural fire levies are determined and collected by local governments under the provisions of the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 and the Local Government Act 2009. They are paid to rural fire brigades within the respective local government area. Rural fire levies are not determined by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service or the state government; they are determined by each local government. There is no requirement for local governments that charge a rural fire levy to report or disclose either the rate or the total collected to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

Local governments can, at their discretion, continue to raise a rural fire levy to supplement their local rural fire brigades. This is a very important point, because we want to make sure that local governments are able to continue supporting their local brigades through the collection of a rural fire levy. The most recent survey of local governments indicated approximately \$4.1 million is collected and distributed to rural fire brigades annually. Rural fire brigades that receive a rural fire levy use the moneys received to assist with funding for their operating expenses, the cost of the construction and maintenance of sheds, and the cost of vehicles and operational equipment.

The Department of Community Safety will continue to discuss the new levy arrangements, including the ongoing provision of the rural fire levy, with the Local Government Association of Queensland and individual local governments. Questions have obviously been raised as to whether local rural fire brigades will receive any of the levies raised from the emergency management fire and rescue levy. The emergency management fire and rescue levy does help the provision of all of our emergency services and the revenue raised will be spent on delivering a broad range of these, including the urban and rural services, the State Emergency Service, disaster management services and other emergency and disaster services. These services are delivered to every corner of the state. Local rural fire brigades will not receive direct funding from the levy. However, brigades will continue to receive funding through subsidies for sheds, vehicles, equipment and training. Furthermore, I envisage that that amount will increase as we go forward.

Importantly, I remind the committee that the government has retained the provisions for councils to, at their discretion, continue to raise the rural fire levy to supplement their local rural fire brigades. We hope that they will continue to do so to help support the important work of the rural fire

brigades in this great state. Recently, I was with the director-general, the commissioner and a number of other officers at the official opening of the Mount Tamborine station. I could see the interaction between the Rural Fire Service and the urban fire service and the great teamwork, professionalism and diligence with which those particular men and women work together.

In relation to the approximately \$4.1 million that is received from the rural fire levy and distributed throughout the whole of the state, obviously I would still like to see local governments collecting those particular levies. From the conversations that we have had with local government, I know that the majority will because we have to continue to have that nexus between volunteer support, local government and the people on the ground. That is the direction that this government is going in. Director-General, would you like to add anything?

**Mr Anderson:** Perhaps the only thing I would add is that we have been on the go since, effectively, 2006 with each of our storm seasons and the need for us to respond. It is true that we are very practised at response, but, even if we look at last year as a typical example, it was predicted to be a benign season yet it was anything but benign. The change to the levy has, in fact, now freed up those funds to be used across all emergency services, rescue and fire, rather than a levy that was hypothecated to urban fire only.

**Mr PUCCI:** As Mr Anderson said, the past year in Logan was anything but a benign season. We had a fire that went on for days in the Greenbank region of Logan and we were hit very hard by the recent flooding from the ex-tropical cyclone. I can say that yellow trucks, red trucks, emergency services across-the-board, police and all involved in Community Safety did a great job and we counted heavily on all of you. That is why Community Safety is very important to those in Logan. We all know that there has been no review of it for over a decade. With reference to the Keelty review, page 3 of the SDS, can you please provide details of all costs involved including travel, accommodation and wages that have been amassed as part of the review?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. I also note his continued support for the rural fire brigade and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, as well as the many SES members of his fine community. It is a fine community because it is a proud community and the Logan electorate consists of more givers than takers.

On 29 November 2012, I advised parliament of the Keelty review into the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Community Safety. This important review represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure Queensland has the best police, emergency and corrective services possible, not just now but in the many decades to come. As the member said, a review of this magnitude has not occurred in emergency services for over a decade. Queensland has some of the best emergency operational capabilities in the world, which I am very proud to have the opportunity to represent as minister and which every other member of the state is also quite rightly proud.

Many professionals and volunteers do an outstanding job—we already have good police and emergency services—and their dedication and skills have been demonstrated in their recent responses during the storm season. However, it is important that we continue to learn from our experiences and improve where we can the services provided to the people of Queensland during times of strife.

Mr Keelty's review will also take into account the recommendations from the Queensland Commission of Audit final report, which was tabled in this parliament on 30 April 2013, and similarly the recommendations of the Malone review into the Rural Fire Service in Queensland which have been accepted in principle and which are subject to further consideration as part of the overall Keelty review. The Keelty review is investigating current organisational structures, decision making, emergency response capabilities and interagency cooperation, which is very important. It is making certain the state's professional and volunteer emergency services staff are supported by the best operational procedures. We want to ensure Queensland continues its proud history of first-class emergency services, and this review will allow us to compare and contrast national and international service delivery models. I look forward to considering the Keelty recommendations when they are delivered.

In relation to the costings, I can advise that the consultancy fees for the review have been managed through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The Department of Community Safety and the Queensland Police Service have paid for the cost of salaries for their respective staff represented on the project team. The wages of the Department of Community Safety staff attached to

the review team total \$205,136.10, including employee superannuation. Other costs of the review have been split between the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Community Safety on a fifty-fifty basis. As at 30 June 2013, expenses totalled \$64,630.96, excluding GST. I am confident that this investment in identifying better ways to deliver better police and emergency services is money well spent and it will provide a solid foundation for the future.

**CHAIR:** Before I pass to the member for Bulimba, I acknowledge Mr Ted Malone MP in the chamber.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Minister, in your opening statement you mentioned—and I wonder if you could expand on this, please—how the community campaign costings of \$3.1 million in 2013-14 and \$2.4 million in 2014-15 will enhance community resilience.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. As with the other members, I thank him for his commitment towards emergency services and particularly the men and women who live in his electorate. It is a significant electorate. I know that one of the previous ministers represented that electorate. Mr Dillaway is now the member for Bulimba and he has a proud history of being passionate about the people in his area, which is great to see.

The Queensland government is developing an ongoing and comprehensive strategy to grow long-term community resilience. Members will recall this was a key for the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry, and financing of \$3.1 million in 2013-14 has been provided to deliver a community campaign in partnership with the Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience. The campaign aims to involve individuals in community activities to prepare for disasters. It will provide a link between the many successful activities already in place to build resilience in Queensland. It will also enable greater coordination and integration into the future. The campaign supports the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry recommendations related to community engagement and building household resilience. A further \$2.4 million will be provided each year from 2014-15 to 2016-17 to continue the delivery of this community campaign.

The community resilience initiative is a call-to-action campaign consisting of high-profile and annual state-wide community events. It is going to be very exciting, year on year, to see how the community engages in this particular program. The events are designed to focus preparation on the annual wet season, including storms and cyclones. The concept seeks to provide the framework by which government, the business sector and households—and I say that it is not just government; it is the business sector and households—can come together to improve self-resilience and disaster resilience. Further, we hope to effectively coordinate these efforts for the benefit of our communities.

The Queensland resilience initiatives will be delivered through two distinct but integral elements: Resilience Week and Resilience Day. Resilience Week will provide a focus to develop public-private partnerships. It will be used as a focal point for a range of annual disaster prevention and preparation activities by government agencies, the non-profit area, the volunteer sector and the private sector. This is about bringing everyone together for a common goal, so we have a group of people to target disaster resilience early on, before tragedies occur. It will showcase innovation and capabilities created by these partnerships across the four elements of disaster management: preparation, preparedness, response and recovery.

Resilience Day will be held at the conclusion of Resilience Week. It will be held in the form of a state-wide working bee. It sounds pretty 'Queenslander-ish' when we think of simple things like that. Through a day of practical action, information and learning, we will support communities so that they are ready for the storm and cyclone season, which certainly affects our coast and the whole state of Queensland. I thank the member for the question. I look forward to all members participating in this special campaign, because it will be driven by the community for the community.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** Minister, I have a follow-on question from your explanation about the new emergency services levy. It relates to the experiences that many of my constituents in the farming part of my electorate went through when the previous government looked at imposing a levy according to the existence of an electricity meter, be it at the house, the dairy or the irrigation water pump. I have a question for clarification. A landowner has a family farm and that family farm consists of a number of separate title deeds. We have a common boundary and separate title deeds. Some title deeds may be registered in the husband's name, some title deeds may be registered in the wife's name, and some title deeds may be registered in the husband's and wife's names as a result of succession and history, but the simple fact is that all deeds are operated as one farm. The only new factor that I am raising with you now which you did not cover earlier was that some of the deeds are

held in different people's names, but effectively it is all one farming unit. My question is this: will that meet the eligibility criteria for only one levy or will that not be the case because one deed is in the husband's and wife's names and another one is in the wife's name and so on, although it is simply the way that it has panned out over a period although effectively it is all run as one farm?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. I will be passing to the director-general and to the deputy director-general, because there will be different instances for particular options that are put forward. A lot of it comes back to the local government and how they are assessing their rates notice. I spoke about the changes to the act. To give another example, in Bundaberg, for example, someone might have a property on a cane paddock that has a number of different lots but they pay one rates notice. In that particular example, for that issue, they pay approximately \$90 for the house and the \$20, but they might have several lots attached to it. A lot is determined according to the rates valuation. I am happy for the director-general to clarify exact amounts. If you are able to give us constituent issues I am more than happy to help those individuals.

**Mr Anderson:** Before I go to the way I think that example will work, I point out that it is true that we are working very closely with all of our stakeholders because we do expect to get some very unusual arrangements and complicated arrangements like you have just described. We have processes in place where we are working very closely with the Local Government Association of Queensland and individual rates officers at a local council level. That is a very active discussion.

If there are ever examples that look odd or complex we can certainly work through individual cases. I suspect that in the case you describe if those individual titles are rated separately they will attract a separate levy. If a property is on one set of titles and they are contiguous, they are joined, we would expect it to collect one levy. I think it does depend on exactly how the property is rated.

**Mr WELLINGTON:** The families that I am familiar with have different titles but they only have one waste disposal collection. Effectively there is one house, one dairy. It just seems it is double dipping.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I will hand back to the director-general, but I point out that it will obviously depend how their financial arrangements are set up. Some people may have the advantage of having one rates notice. Some might have a number to obtain tax advantages. That is the situation if the lots are linked together and there is one rates notice. I am happy to work through this with the local councils. For the technical details I will hand over to the director-general.

**Mr Anderson:** Our fire commissioner is here and he is used to dealing with some of those issues under the previous levy. I would invite Lee Johnson to make a comment.

**Commissioner Johnson:** The only point I would add is that since 1985 when the urban fire levy was first brought in we have had levies across farm land. The minister's own electorate of Bundaberg is a classic example. Whilst I cannot answer your question 100 per cent accurately, our experience and my memory of that time—and I have been in the service the whole time the levy system has been in place—is that there were the same sorts of rules. I do not recall the specific example you raise being a problem, but we can follow it up. In all those years plenty of farm land—contiguous lots and farming lots—has been under the urban fire levy. But it does really fall to the rateable notice per property is my understanding.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Rockhampton.

**Mr BYRNE:** Since the rural fire levy has been brought up—and I acknowledge your answers and statements made earlier in the proceedings—with reference to page 55 of Budget Paper No. 4, the revenue from the Emergency Management, Fire and Rescue Levy is projected to be \$187.63 million over four years. Considering the funding of emergency management, fire and rescue, has fallen by more than \$24 million, or about the same amount as the levy will collect in 2013-14, with no new funding provided to rural fire brigades, as you indicated earlier, do you concede that this levy is purely a revenue grab?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** The simple answer is no, but I will go into more detail. The budget for emergency management, fire and rescue is \$643.2 million. Prior to the Emergency Management, Fire and Rescue Levy we had the urban fire levy which contributed approximately \$350 million—and I am happy to get the exact figure. Out of that, approximately \$28 million was allocated to rural fire brigades and the rest went to consolidated revenue. What we will see now is greater sustainability and security in relation to the SES, the Rural Fire Service, Emergency Management Queensland and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

There have been perceptions in relation to red trucks and yellow trucks—urban and rural. Instead of having an urban fire department and then funds going to the Rural Fire Service, the funds will now come into my department and then we will allocate those funds to emergency services. Please bear in mind that we have already had the Malone review looking at functions, structures, funding and leadership in relation to the Rural Fire Service. We also have the Keelty review which will also deal with a number of matters relating to the Rural Fire Service and the other areas within the Department of Community Safety.

As the minister I guarantee right now that participation in the Rural Fire Service will increase in the future as will its funding models. This will assist the Rural Fire Service. This funding increase will assist volunteer organisations such as the SES, the coast guard and the volunteer marine coast guard.

There were 91 recommendations in the Malone review report into the Rural Fire Service. Many millions of dollars will be added to the Rural Fire Service in the years ahead. With the Keelty review I am sure there will be an increase in importance of the Rural Fire Service across the state of Queensland. I will pass to the director-general.

**Mr Anderson:** There has been no diminution of services on the front line either for emergency management or for urban or rural fire services. Any efficiencies that have been made in the past 12 months have been made away from front-line service delivery. We have certainly limited our expenditure over the last 12 months, but it has not been at the expense of front-line services.

**Mr BYRNE:** Thank you, Director-General. I was going to talk about why there is not a direct allocation to the Rural Fire Service but I think you have probably tried to steer around that. I am more interested, Director-General, in what advice you may have given the minister more broadly about the possibility of some local councils no longer being willing to collect levies for these services. Is there any advice or potentially any push back from local governments with regard to this matter?

**Mr Anderson:** Thank you for the question. I have already said that we are working very closely with local governments to ensure there is an understanding of the levy itself, how it will function and, in particular, any of the complex calculations that will come about. There are already many questions coming into the department. We have had everything from issues around contiguous blocks to one family wanting one levy for three blocks, not telling was that one block was on the coast and one block was in the hinterland. We worked through these very complex arrangements.

The advice we have given is always only advice. There has been no change in the capacity for local governments to collect levies. Should a local government choose not to collect the levy then that will provide a problem for the local rural fire brigade. We will continue to support the rural fire brigades. But that will obviously impact on a local brigade. That has been our advice to the minister.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** As I alluded to in my previous statements, councils collect approximately \$4.1 million in levies. That predominantly goes to rural fire brigades. I am confident the increase in funds from the Emergency Management, Fire and Rescue Levy will go a long way to assisting rural fire services. If you do the calculations based on the figures I provided before—a bit over \$3 for some many thousands of homes and then \$2.80 for those thereafter—it is predicted that local government will collect approximately \$7.1 million. Local government will now collect a greater fee for the work they do. We will provide assistance as far as IT systems are concerned. We have allocated a certain amount for that in the budget.

The council's previously collected \$4.1 million in levies and now they will be collecting \$7.1 million. It is hoped that that money will go back into rural fire services. We are continuing to negotiate with local governments in relation to that. At the end of the day, that is the choice of the local community. I implore them that the nexus between the Rural Fire Service and local government is very important.

We had discrepancies when it came to the ambulance levy. People began abusing the system. There was the expectation that if they had certain injuries they could use the service. The majority of people used the service properly. A lot of people thought that because they paid the levy they had a right to use it. That is not what it was about. We want to continue that connection. Sorry for going on about it, but it is very important.

**Mr BYRNE:** The next question is to the director-general. The minister mentioned the Malone review earlier. There was an urban operational officer who was appointed to that review team who left that review team. That is my understanding. I am wondering why that was. Was that because that officer was warning about some risks to public safety?

**Mr Anderson:** I can answer the last part first. We have had no advice and have not advised the minister of any concern about increased safety risks as a result of the work of the Malone review. I will just consult with the fire commissioner about who the officer was that you refer to.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Whilst the director-general and commissioner are conferring, I point out that we are all very proud of every officer of the Rural Fire Service. They are very professional and diligent. If there is any officer who thinks that they have been harmed in any way, shape or form I encourage them to stand up and come forward.

**Mr BYRNE:** There are a variety of views.

**Mr Anderson:** The urban officer I will not name but that person is named on the report as a member of the team and played a role through the period of the review. It is true that the review team went to many regions and held many consultations. I think they saw over 1,000 people.

**Mr BYRNE:** I refer to comments that the senior firefighters union have made that the structural changes recommended by the Malone review pose 'serious implications that present a real risk to the community and safety of emergency service officers'. These comments come from your most senior professional firefighters. Are they just getting the wrong end of the stick here?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Just before the director-general answers that question, I want to give some background in relation to the UFU and particularly their executive members. The department and I have controlled ourselves up until probably last week in relation to giving them every opportunity to represent their members in a very professional and equal way. But when the head of the United Firefighters Union, who is belittling, comes under the Council of Unions—

**Mr BYRNE:** It is not the UFU.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** And when they even have the Labor Party as a go-to site on their website, they are not impartial in relation to their particular involvement.

**Mr BYRNE:** I understand your views, Minister, but it is not the UFU that is making those comments.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Can I answer the question?

**CHAIR:** Just allow the minister to continue.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** You included the UFU in your question, member.

**Mr BYRNE:** It is the senior—

**Mr DEMPSEY:** That is why I answering it. You have to remember that these are unbiased people. In relation to their current enterprise bargain, they had the opportunity to accept a 2.7 per cent wage negotiation. They have missed out on that and gone down to 2.2 per cent simply because their executive is beholden to the Australian Labor Party and the Council of Unions to the detriment of their staff, which is an absolute disgrace.

**Mr BYRNE:** These are senior officers—nothing to do with the union.

**CHAIR:** Let him finish but, even though the time has expired for your 20 minutes, I will give you an opportunity to follow it up, just so that we can allow the minister to finish what he is saying.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the chairman for that. For the particular details I will pass over to the director-general.

**Mr Anderson:** Indeed the group you are talking about is the Senior Officers Union.

**Mr BYRNE:** Correct.

**Mr Anderson:** And they are indeed in negotiation at the moment about their wages and that has hit an impasse; that is true. The way that the Malone review was dealt with was that the department was intimately involved in the outcomes of those recommendations. They were made very visible to the department. The department understands them and already we are seeing some of the elements of the Malone review implemented. For example, 'Operation Cool Burn' has commenced. That is a process of mitigation burning off. That goes to increased safety of the community.

The 91 recommendations have then, by and large, been referred to Mr Keely for consideration as part of the Keely review. That will be a holistic look at how an emergency management fire might be dealt with within the state. The Malone report itself actually posits that we would have a new

structure of fire management plans around the state which would increase the safety of the state. So I guess the point I am making is that the department is assessing every one of those recommendations. It will give advice. It is only advice. That will be taken into account as Mr Keelty continues his work, and then the Keelty review will come at a later point.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Ipswich West.

**Mr CHOAT:** Minister, I would like to take the questioning to the Queensland Ambulance Service and particularly ambulance officers. Can I just say that I have two very, very good ambulance stations in my electorate at Lowood and Rosewood. There are great teams there, led ably by Brian Nash and Glen Dudley respectively. They are just great people and the community is right behind them. I had the pleasure of going out to see a new ambulance late last year and Glen showed us, and I was very impressed with him and his team and also what they have to use. Getting to the point, I refer to page 3 of the SDS. How will the 60 additional ambulance officers help to reduce ramping and off-stretcher time?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question, and I hope I have a further opportunity to talk about how we have addressed ramping and off-stretcher time, because it is very exciting. I am very proud of the work that the Queensland Ambulance Service, and particularly Commissioner Russell Bowles, has done in that particular area. It has been quite outstanding.

In answer to your question, in the last financial year, 2012-13, this government provided funding for the appointment of an additional 60 ambulance officers. These additional positions were created to help meet increased demand for ambulance services in Queensland. The appointment of those 60 additional officers in 2012-13 was a key achievement for the Queensland government's six-month action plan for January-June 2013. As of 30 June 2013, all of the 60 additional ambulance officers were added to the roster. In 2013-14, funding for a further 60 positions has been provided, at an additional cost of \$5.3 million. These extra resources are to help ensure that Queenslanders continue to have access to a quality and a responsive Ambulance Service right across our great state.

As well as these additional ambulance officers, the QAS is working closely with the department of health on addressing the issues of ramping at emergency departments. The Metropolitan Emergency Department Access Initiative or, as we all know, the MEDAI report revealed that for the Queensland Ambulance Service—and please listen to these figures as they are quite incredible—in 2010-11 there was 1,315 days of lost time associated with ramping in excess of 30 minutes at 27 major department of health hospitals. Following the implementation of the MEDAI report recommendations, for the period January-June 2013 there has been a significant improvement in operational time, with in excess of 318 days of lost time compared to 751 days of lost time in the same period the previous year. I remember coming into this portfolio and seeing counts of up to 40,000—they were counting in minutes at that stage. So to see this almost being halved in a 12-month period is outstanding, particularly for the Queensland Ambulance Service officers, who do a magnificent job.

This means that 433 days of ambulance availability has been given back to the Queensland community. More specifically, additional officers and MEDAI improvements will ensure the Queensland Ambulance Service can deliver patients as quickly as possible to our hospitals. They can then get back on the road and respond to other needs in this lifesaving area. Again, I am complimentary of the Queensland Ambulance Service and the commissioner and the types of technology that they have—the iROAM Systems and the Toughpads that have been in for a number of years. What those officers are doing is quite remarkable. I thank the member for the question.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Bulimba.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Minister, with reference to the great volunteers at the eastern group SES depot, just a few minutes walk from both my office and my home in Morningside, I note that the SDS on page 3 highlights additional flood boats will be purchased to support SES groups. Could you please detail to the committee the benefits of the flood boat program for 2013-14?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for Bulimba. Let me start by acknowledging the great work that our SES volunteers do, particularly over the past 12 months with the disaster events, Tropical Cyclone Oswald and associated rainfall, in January 2013. The government is focused on ensuring our volunteers are supported in the important and sometimes dangerous work that they do to help keep Queensland communities safe.



The 2013-14 budget provides approximately \$16 million to support our SES. During 2012-13 SES volunteers demonstrated their dedication to their communities with an estimated actual number of SES volunteer hours of operation of 130,950 against a target estimate of 70,000 to 80,000. Those estimates and targets are aspirational figures, and you can see that there is one that has been blown out of the water in relation to what was achieved. There are peaks and troughs, but we have to set estimates right across-the-board; otherwise, we do not have aspirational figures to rise up to. That is what these services do: they continue to rise up, they unite, they believe and they show their commitment and determination in so many ways right across-the-board. I am impressed every day about the way they go about it. And it is not just the front-line officers but also the back-of-house officers who support them. They do a magnificent job.

Turning back to the question, during 2012-13 SES volunteers responded to calls for assistance in response to a number of major events, including the Central and Southern Queensland low which occurred from February-March 2013 and Tropical Cyclone Oswald and the associated rainfall and flooding in January 2013. I would also like to acknowledge the work of my colleague the Assistant Minister for Emergency Volunteers—and I am very appreciative to have him and to have a particular minister in charge of volunteers—Mr Ted Malone MP, who has examined in detail the ways in which this government can do even better to support our volunteers in the future.

It is no secret that floods are the No. 1 disaster risk to communities across Queensland. The response to these disaster situations requires specialist skills and equipment such as flood boats. The SES states that 15 flood boats will be delivered in 2013-14 as part of the budget. I am pleased to inform the committee that, in fact, 27 new and replacement flood boats will be delivered this year. Fifteen flood boats will be purchased, completing the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry funded program of 56 boats, and a further 12 flood boats have also been provided in this budget, bringing the total number to 27 for 2013-14.

As the committee may or may not be aware, the SES has nine approved operational support and response functions, and they are: storm damage, land search, road accident rescue, vertical rescue, flood boat response, traffic management, agency support, incident management and specialist rescue. This department continues to work closely with councils in determining the functions of the SES units, the SES membership skills and the risk profile in their particular areas. It is on this basis that the flood boat allocations are made throughout the year. The allocation of these 27 additional flood boats in this year's budget has not yet been finalised. Clearly, the focus of this government is on front-line services, and this includes ensuring that funding is directed to those important equipment requirements such as flood boats.

I have had the privilege of visiting many SES sheds, from Cairns to up in the hinterland in those particular areas right down to Roma, to the Gold Coast regions and in between, and each of those particular volunteers has made a remarkable commitment to their community.

I will talk about another volunteer service. When I was up at Mount Tamborine an elderly gentleman—he was, I think, 92 years of age—was doing the radios. He has been doing that for 30 to 40 years. I just thought it was very inspirational for our youth to realise that, it does not matter what you do, you have some way of contributing and helping your community. He does that and does it in a remarkable and inspirational way for his community. He is a legend, at the end of the day.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Ipswich West.

**Mr CHOAT:** Before I proceed, we got a great Christmas present in Lowood last year with our new SES facility. Obviously, you know that it is ground zero when it comes to all things Wivenhoe so we are very, very grateful for that. I will take us now to Corrective Services. I do note in the SDS on page 3 the Woodford Correctional Centre. Could you outline the progress of the centre, the MSU upgrade and how this project will enhance prison capacity?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. Obviously we have Acting Commissioner Mark Rallings here from Corrective Services. I would like to again, as I did with the other commissioners, ensure that he thanks his members for the outstanding work that they do in correctional facilities. I have been so impressed on my visits to correctional facilities—not just those that I have had to visit in a work capacity and other occupations but particularly in this role where I am able to get an intense view of the operation of correctional facilities—by the outstanding work that they do. It is quite unbelievable. They certainly need to be thanked for their professionalism and their dedication.

Turning to your question regarding the maximum security unit upgrade, the capacity of Queensland prisons is managed centrally to ensure safe, secure and cost-effective use of infrastructure and services. Queensland Corrective Services use both long-term capacity utilisation management strategies and daily monitoring in order to respond to short-term prisoner fluctuations across this great state. As at 30 June 2013 there were 6,077 prisoners in custody. This includes 5,553 prisoners accommodated in secure custody and 524 prisoners accommodated in low custody. As at 30 June 2013 there were 14 prisoners accommodated in the maximum security unit at the Brisbane Correctional Centre. Queensland currently has one maximum security unit at the Brisbane Correctional Centre. During 2012-13, work commenced on the upgrade of the Woodford Correctional Centre's maximum security unit. The forecast completion is scheduled for later this month. Operational funding of up to \$2 million has been allocated to this project. Maximum security units are prisons within prisons. They are certainly not a nice place to be, but they are a necessity for people who have offended against the community. These centres accommodate extremely dangerous and violent prisoners. To be accommodated in the maximum security unit, a prisoner must be on a maximum security order because they have a high risk of escape, a high likelihood of killing or seriously injuring other prisoners or persons, or are a substantial threat to the security and good order of the overall correctional facility. A maximum security order can be for a period of up to six months and is reviewed at the end of the order or any time prior to the expiration of that particular order.

While accommodated in the maximum security unit, prisoners are subject to a strict management regime which includes limited movements using mechanical restraints as well as heightened electronic and physical supervision. Prisoners are also subject to rigorous personal and general searches. A maximum security unit pre-association assessment report is completed to determine the suitability of a prisoner to associate with other prisoners prior to any actual association occurring. Queensland Corrective Service's deputy commissioner, state-wide operations, is responsible for approving the assessment. In order to transition out of maximum security to the general prison population, prisoners are required to demonstrate that they are no longer at risk of escaping, harming others in a prison or a substantial threat to security.

The upgrade of the Woodford maximum security facility will enhance the capacity for Queensland Corrective Services. It will create 20 additional places to manage dangerous and violent prisoners. I thank all the correctional officers for their hard work and dedication, particularly in this very hard and complex area. Maximum security is certainly a place you do not want to go to. I encourage all Queenslanders not to go to jail in the first place. People may have perceptions about it, but a short period of time in there would certainly change their view on the world and their appreciation of certain freedoms. So please obey the laws.

**CHAIR:** May I take you to pages 8 and 9 of the Service Delivery Statement, which refers to red-tape reduction. Perhaps you might indicate what your department is doing and what it has done to achieve this red-tape reduction, on which we are all wishing you the greatest of success.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank you, Mr Chairman, and it was great to catch up with you at the old Ipswich fire station the other day when 16 new fire officers and 19 in total—

**CHAIR:**—two of whom were women, too, I might say.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Yes, it was amazing to see. That is a great representation of the community as well. Like many of the services, the selection of officers has to be representative of all of the community to ensure we have great balance, which we have across all of our services.

In relation particularly to red tape—not just officers in red trucks—like the government, the Department of Community Safety is also committed to reducing red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy. The department has many red-tape reduction initiatives either implemented or underway. Some are simple administrative processes, reforms which reduce the number of forms a person has to fill out. Others are more significant legislative reviews like the review of the Building Fire Safety Regulation 2008 which is currently underway. The review looks at safe options to reduce unnecessary obligations on occupiers and owners of buildings. The government is also looking across all aspects of community safety regulation to identify areas where changes can be made to reduce the regulatory burden on business and the community. To date, more than 40 red-tape reduction initiatives of this nature have been identified, and I look forward to that legislation coming forward.

Examples of initiatives that have reduced the administrative burden on the community, volunteers, business and Community Safety staff include reducing the amount of paperwork and approval requirements associated with resupply documentation. This ensures that communities, rural

properties or individuals stranded and cut off from their normal sources of food and basic commodities can be supplied with goods in a more timely manner. There are also changes to the guidelines and application processes for the Natural Disaster Resilience Program. This removes duplication, reducing the administrative burden on councils applying for funding. This is very significant. Previously, councils had to make three to four different applications; now there is one. Time efficiency is achieved in councils only making the one application and also in the assessment as only one application is required. That is a significant reduction in the burden for councils.

We are also simplifying the State Emergency Services' Non-Recurrent Subsidy program, removing a requirement for Rural Fire Service Queensland volunteers to undergo a further criminal history check when joining the interstate deployment register. This cuts processing delays, which can impact on volunteer participation. I find it quite ridiculous that we do criminal history checks across the services. It is the same for every person; they are all volunteering for Queensland. We have to get out of the way and let people do the one check and move on, and that is what we are working towards.

We are also distributing parole board documentation electronically to board members to reduce the substantial volume of paper based documents. Honourable members should imagine the situation prior to this. There are three parole boards across the state. I will give you one example and I am happy to provide exact figures. It was costing us approximately \$340,000 per year to process the paperwork. I visited their office and saw the big black bags—and we talk about cabinet bags—containing parole board documents that would go out every week to the parole boards around the state. Now it is costing us less than \$34,000 for IT, including iPads, to deal with the same amount of paperwork and administration, but that contract is over four years. So instead of \$340,000 every year it is now costing us \$34,000 to undertake the same process. I must admit that some members of the parole boards liked to read the hard copies. However, when they realised that they could use the tablets and do the same work while they watch their kids play football, do other things on the weekend or while doing other tasks, there was a revelation for many of them. That is just one of the many savings, and I will not keep you here all night. Importantly, these changes contribute to the department and its volunteers working more efficiently and effectively. This means more time can be spent on delivering valuable core services. It also ensures that volunteers who give their valuable time freely are not caught up in unnecessary red tape.

Other red-tape reduction initiatives that the department has implemented include removing a requirement for rural fire brigades to replace their vehicles after 20 years. This means that brigades now have greater autonomy when deciding whether to keep a vehicle for longer than 20 years in cases where the vehicle is still in good condition. We are also introducing a free call number for rural fire incident reporting to reduce duplication in the reporting of incidents, collecting data from alarm monitoring clients electronically, amending the Corrective Services Act so that remand prisoners can only be given a security classification of maximum or high—and I think I explained to the member for Rockhampton in parliament that the reason for that classification when they are moving in and out of prisons is that we set the standard high right from the very beginning. That has removed the administrative burden of having to access and review security classifications for prisoners not yet serving a sentence.

Further measures include the implementation of a volunteer expression of interest web form. This gives rural fire brigades more control over how they recruit new members and reduces the potential for waste in application kits. There is also the implementation of business process reforms by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service to allow industry to lodge applications online for referral agent advice regarding building approvals. It is expected that this process will result in substantial time and cost savings for industry and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. As stated, we have the review of the Building Fire Safety Regulation 2008. The terms of reference of the review include identifying options to simplify the requirements for builders and owners and a review of the smoke alarm and fire warden provisions of the Fire and Rescue Service Act to remove unnecessary duplication while maintaining a community safety focus. We see so many instances of people not wanting to become fire wardens because of the paperwork. Now this will encourage them.

As the committee would be aware, the Malone review into the Rural Fire Service in Queensland made 91 recommendations. These included recommendations to provide greater efficiency, reduce red tape and provide more autonomy for volunteers, which is very important. As I have said before, the implementation of recommendations regarding the structure, function, leadership and funding were also referred to the Keely review, and I look forward to that in the time

ahead. The review will also provide strategic outcomes for the whole of the department. It was great to be part of that review and highlight the great work that our volunteers do in helping the whole of our state.

A review of the Corrective Services Act is also currently being undertaken and is to be completed by 27 August. As is evident, the department has not been idle in identifying red-tape reduction and acting swiftly. I commend everybody for their efforts on this to date. I have gone through some briefing notes quite quickly. There are many others, but I will not go through them so we can get on with the estimates hearing.

**Mr BYRNE:** Director-general, we have heard about a number of other reviews this evening, but surely one of the most important reports regarding fire and emergency fire management response came out of the Victorian bushfire royal commission. It is with regard to the recommendations of that commission, particularly the coordination between urban and rural firefighting capabilities, as well as single command and control architecture and communications apparatus, that I ask you: how do you feel those recommendations, which are obviously fairly large and detailed, compare with the in-principle supported Malone review?

**Mr Anderson:** Thank you for the question. I will invite the commissioner to answer. He has some more detailed operational understanding of the communication structure and the use of the incident management systems that we use and, in fact, are expert in. To set the context for that discussion, I will advise that we have analysed the Victorian royal commission in great detail and it has informed much of the work and the protocols that we have developed in Queensland. Over the period of this commissioner's—Lee Johnson's—tenure he has worked tirelessly to bring one Fire Service to Queensland, a coordinated Fire Service. That is not saying it devalues any part of the Fire Service, but that has been an overarching requirement for us and the context in which we read the Victorian commission. I will pass to Lee Johnson for comment.

**Commissioner Johnson:** In Queensland we have studied the Victorian bushfire royal commission outcomes and, previous to that, the coronial inquiry regarding the Linton bushfire where a number of Victorian firefighters were killed. Right across Australia the fire and emergency services authorities use the AIIIM system, which is Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management, which is principally based on fundamental principles that Mr Byrne would be familiar with from—

**Mr BYRNE:** I am an incident control. I understand.

**Commissioner Johnson:** Excellent. That has been well practised and entrenched in Queensland for many, many years. We are continuing to train both paid staff and volunteer staff in the application of those systems, and it is a fundamental core component of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service doctrine that that system and that process should be in place. One of the things about that is that, whilst urban fire officers, I suppose, tend to rely more on rank or their position, the actual AIIIM system is not a rank based system. It is really based on the most competent person for the particular job we are at.

Quite a number of years ago, I knew myself that we had made a lot of progress when there was a major fire in the Gold Coast hinterland and a rural volunteer officer—he now does some part-time training work for us—actually took control of that fire inside the Gold Coast urban fire district. Under his command were superintendents and inspectors from the urban fire service, and it gave me great comfort to understand that we had been working for a long time to make sure that that integrated approach to command and control—the unity-of-command principle where there is only one boss—was very well established.

With the Malone review and the Keelty review, I am sure many aspects of that review will be reinforced. I know that the Malone review is particularly keen to train more volunteers in incident management roles, and we are undertaking that process. It is a continuous process.

The minister said earlier that floods and cyclones are probably the No. 1 risk for us in Queensland. Probably over the last 10 years bushfire has been a steadily increasing risk. Whilst it might not be our No. 1 risk, the skills and attributes that our volunteers, as well as our paid staff, have are equally applicable whether we are working on a cyclone recovery, fire or flood. So I do not see that fundamentally changing at all.

**Mr BYRNE:** Minister, I want to move on to patient transports and the Queensland Ambulance Service. The SDS at page 2 talks about strategic direction. Minister, when was the idea to privatise ambulance patient transport services and the move of the Queensland Ambulance Service into Queensland Health, which is currently being trialled in the Metro South hospital district, first raised with you?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. Patient transport has been going on in the private sector for many years. It has been under Queensland Health for many, many years in relation to low-risk patients. St Johns ambulance, OzCare and a number of the other Catholic diocese around the state contribute and work in with Queensland Health in relation to patient transport issues.

In relation to where we stand, we have the Commission of Audit report in relation to contestability, and obviously a lot of this is pending the Keelty report as well. I look forward to being able to go through and assess those determinations in the future. But in relation to the particular issue, as I stated in my opening statement in relation to the overall department, we do not want to sit on our hands. Whilst I believe that right now we have the best ambulance service in Australia, I will ensure it will be the best ambulance service in the decades to come. I make no apologies for looking at all avenues in an adult way, without having a blindfold on and thinking that this system will fit Queenslanders in future decades.

**Mr Anderson:** I would like to introduce Russell Bowles, the Commissioner for the Queensland Ambulance Service. Sir, you used an example of where there is a trial. I just did not hear—

**Mr BYRNE:** There is currently a trial underway, as far as I understand, with Metro South hospital district; is that correct?

**Mr Anderson:** I will pass to Russell Bowles.

**Commissioner Bowles:** I suppose the first thing I would like do is actually praise the good work of our patient transport officers, which they do day in and day out in this state, transporting people between hospitals and medical facilities. The people they transport are people who meet a criteria and have been medically authorised.

As the minister just stated, there have been a whole range of organisations in the community which have undertaken the non-urgent transportation of people who need to go to various clinics or medical facilities. To give some examples, there is Home and Community Care and some RSLs in some communities, but they deal with very low acuity patients who would not meet the criteria of the Ambulance Service in our patient transport network. Obviously, for those who do meet the criteria there are a number of organisations that have expressed a desire to provide non-urgent ambulance services for people who need some type of care, whether they are non-urgent or not, in transfer.

But in terms of the current government policy, QAS notes that, through recommendation 113, the government's response to the independent commission is that it is noted and put over to the Keelty review. As far as the trial that was in the *Courier-Mail* some time ago in regard to the Metro South area of the state, we have had quite significant discussions with Metro South. They are patients who do not traditionally meet ambulance transport guidelines, so these are patients who they say do not need care during transport. I think they have an interstate firm that is providing some of the transport services for them.

But, as I say, we will continue to work with all of the health facilities, and it is not unusual for Health to provide ambulance services. Like us, they have that legislative ability to provide ambulance services, and they have done so for many, many years. They have provided services between major metropolitan hospitals for patients who require ambulance transport. I think it is also worth noting that throughout the state of Queensland there are approximately 20 hospital based ambulance services whereby the hospital facility provides the service.

**Mr BYRNE:** I understand that context. That is not really what I am getting at. Thank you for all the background. That is very interesting, but I sort of knew that anyway. I want to know when the department first was alerted to the possibility of what has been recommended by Costello and so forth and other avenues. What was the first point of knowledge? When did you become alerted to this possibility as a department, as a minister, as a director-general?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Is the question in relation to patient transport?

**Mr BYRNE:** Yes.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Patient transport, as has just been alluded to through the previous questioning, has been ongoing through hospitals for many years. The particular instance to which you refer was an article in the *Courier-Mail*—I have it here—on 7 June 2013. The media article states that Metro South Health commenced a three-month trial on 1 June with National Patient Transport, a Victorian based private ambulance firm. The hospital and health boards can provide their own ambulance transport service, as we just previously said, and obviously any questions in relation to that particular issue should be directed to my colleague the Minister for Health, the relevant minister.

**Mr BYRNE:** I think you are probably right there, because obviously he has been involved. We have information that I can table that the minister and the director-general and the Premier were all talking about it on 15 May 2012. I can probably table that to point out that this was all going on in the background. But anyway, we will move on.

Minister, I refer to the SDS at page 8. Can you list precisely, or in general terms, the show-cause notices and contractual breaches, for example in terms of quality or service related show-cause notices, issued to private providers by the Department of Community Safety or its agents since March 2012 and list any penalties or fines that were issued relating to a breach?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. First of all, I would like to just put on record that we have a zero-tolerance policy in relation to assaults, particularly in relation to correctional staff within our prisons. I will make that quite clear.

In relation to privatisation—or private prisons as such—many years ago the previous Labor government privatised the operation of approximately 22 per cent of our correctional facilities. It has been in line with other comments through the Costello report in relation to contestability as well going forward. There are a number of avenues in the audit report in relation to some of the great work that our correctional facilities already do. For further clarification I will pass to the director-general.

**Mr Anderson:** Just to clarify, you are seeking a list of the default notices or the contractual mechanisms that were used for private prisons for a period of time?

**Mr BYRNE:** Yes, I am. If there is a commercial-in-confidence piece or you need to go away and find the data, I am happy to put it on notice.

**Mr Anderson:** Could we take that on notice? We will find the data. I suspect that one of the events you are talking about is at the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre?

**Mr BYRNE:** Yes, it is.

**Mr Anderson:** Indeed, we have monitors on site at the moment. But that is exercising our rights over the contract. It is true that we have a robust relationship with our private prison operators. And by 'robust' I mean that the contractual management is done in a mature way in which we do not mind pointing out any shortcomings in service delivery and applying any penalties that pertain under the contract. We are working our way through one of those issues right now. But if we could take it on notice, we will go through—

**Mr BYRNE:** No, I appreciate that. You have answered part of the next question, which was what you are doing in direct oversight, essentially, of the issue to which we have just referred. It is good to hear that you have taken direct action and you are stepping into that space, because it was pretty obvious that it needed to be done.

**Mr Anderson:** Yes, and we have monitors on site. We take reports from them regularly. Clearly, one of the powers of the mixed market that we have here—that is, private and public prison operators—is that we are able to use the full mechanisms under the contract to get the services we have paid for.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Just to follow up from the director-general there, that particular operator is being required to pay the expenses associated with the full-time operational monitors, so there are no increased costs on the taxpayers of Queensland. If there are any failures, they themselves have to fulfil those obligations to continue the contract.

**Mr PUCCI:** Minister, I earlier asked a question about the Keelty review, and I have heard you mention the Malone review a few times in answering some of the questions. The minister knows and the assistant minister, Ted Malone, the member for Mirani, also knows—I know he was in the room earlier today for estimates—that I work closely with my rural fire services and I am a big supporter of theirs because they are a big part of community safety in the Logan area. Could you please outline the terms of the Malone review into rural fire services in Queensland that is referred to on page 3 of the SDS and how this government proposes to enhance support to the rural fire brigade?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. It is an important question because it goes to the heart of what this government is focusing on—that is, volunteers and about empowering people on the ground. I sincerely say thank you and I am glad to be able to talk about the Malone review into rural fire services. This government recognises and appreciates the efforts of many thousands of volunteers—35,000 rural firefighters—who work hard to protect Queensland and Queenslanders. The Rural Fire Service Queensland brigade provides fire management for rural and semirural communities across 93 per cent of this state. Of the Rural Fire Service's approximately 35,000

volunteers, over 12,500 are actually operationally trained. That refers back to that other elderly gentleman and goes to show that there are many other tasks that volunteers are able to achieve in the Rural Fire Service.

The report of the Malone review into rural fire services in Queensland was released in April 2013. The Malone review team was led by the Assistant Minister for Emergency Volunteers, who is with us this evening. Mr Ted Malone met with more than 1,000 volunteer firefighters at 13 public meetings across the state. He also met with many volunteers, and they support the Malone review. In addition, meetings were held with rural operations staff in 11 locations and more than 240 submissions were made from members of the community. The report contains 91 recommendations regarding the structure, function, leadership and funding of rural fire services. Recommendations pave the way for a greater support of our hardworking volunteer rural firefighters at the local level and better management of the Queensland fire risk. As the commissioner said, it is ensuring that the risk of fire is only just behind the risk of flooding. We have to have proper coordination and structures in place to address that.

While some of the recommendations are being considered as part of the wider Keelty review, the following recommendations have also been approved for implementation. From 1 July this year, Rural Operations and Rural Fire Service was collectively renamed Rural Fire Service Queensland and is to be led by a deputy commissioner as in recommendation 7. Work has commenced on the position description for the deputy commissioner and the selection process will be undertaken following delivery of the Keelty review of the police and the Department of Community Safety. Operation Cool Burn has been implemented. This will assist in focusing staff, volunteers, media and landholders on the vital work of hazard mitigation and other pre-fire season activities as in recommendation 47. In addition to the above, a joint working group has been established and this comprises both staff and volunteers from the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Fire Service Queensland and Emergency Management Queensland, including the State Emergency Service. It will address the following training recommendations: combining training for volunteers as in recommendation 5; mobile training team establishment to deliver the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System, as we mentioned before, as in recommendation 18; coordinated training curriculum in conjunction with external registered training organisations as in recommendations 29 and 30; and common recognition of volunteer training programs for Rural Fire Service Queensland, State Emergency Service and volunteer organisations as in recommendations 33 and 34. That is about getting rid of that red tape between organisations.

A further two working groups have been established, the first of which will examine the integration of wildfire issues into the broader disaster management framework. This will give effect to a planning system for managing wildfire risk to be legislated. To complement disaster management arrangements, fire management boundaries that are aligned with district disaster boundaries will support response and mitigation planning under relevant local and district planning processes as in recommendations 36, 37 and 38 and membership of the district fire management group is to be at the discretion of the group chair as in recommendation 39. The second working group will examine uniform and equipment issues for Rural Fire Service Queensland and the State Emergency Service to give effect to updating the Rural Fire Service Queensland equipment catalogue as in recommendation 75 and more timely and cost-effective delivery of personal protective equipment as in recommendation 88.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service will also be working through the legal implications of the following three recommendations. First, fire officers and brigade officers are confirmed to have the ability to seek assistance from any person with services available at the fire and that any such person is protected under relevant workplace health and safety and WorkCover legislation as in recommendation 64. There is a wider field in relation to the whole of government, so we are looking at those particular issues as well, not just within this particular department. Second, it is confirmed that the owner of a property is responsible for construction and maintenance of effective fire breaks where fuel load creates a risk as in recommendation 48. Third, it is confirmed that volunteers are not liable under other criminal and common law for any act or omission made in good faith providing such acts or omissions are not reckless, negligent or malicious as in recommendation 65. That is very important to protect our volunteers.

Whilst waiting for the final report from the Keelty review, Rural Fire Service Queensland will continue to work in assisting Queenslanders prepare for the fire season through Operation Cool Burn and will continue to help conduct hazard mitigation burn-offs to reduce the risks of major bushfires

across our landscape. This government remains committed to strengthening Rural Fire Service Queensland, its volunteers and brigades right across Queensland and will continue to work towards that valuable outcome.

**Mr CHOAT:** Minister, with the Department of Community Safety strategic objectives detailed on page 2 of the SDS, including the objective of offenders being held to account and that their future risk of reoffending is reduced, I understand that there have been recent changes to the way in which Queensland Corrective Services informs the community if an offender under the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act removes their bracelet. Can you please outline the new processes for informing the community?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. It is a very pertinent question. It is very important that the community of Queensland have confidence in relation to DPSOA offenders. Queensland Corrective Services dedicates considerable resources to the supervision and surveillance of dangerous sex offenders who are released by the Supreme Court under the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003. Queensland Corrective Services closely monitors the state's most dangerous sex offenders under this act. This close scrutiny includes GPS tracking; specialised surveillance by Queensland Corrective Service officers; random home visits; drug and alcohol testing, if required under their orders; collateral checks, intelligence checks and vehicle checks. Supervision also involves programs to further address offending and facilitate safe reintegration into the community if possible. Some 49 specialist full-time equivalent staff were allocated for the supervision, surveillance and monitoring of high-risk sex offenders during 2012-13. In relation to current orders, as of 30 June 2013 there were 87 offenders being supervised in the community; 17 offenders in prison subject to continuing detention orders; 22 offenders in prison subject to interim detention orders under the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act after having been returned to the Supreme Court for contravening their supervisory order conditions; and three offenders being held in prison to be released to supervision.

With regard to recidivism in this particular area, of the 145 sex offenders who have been managed under the DPSOA since its inception in 2003, 10 or approximately seven per cent have sexually reoffended or committed offences consistent with their offending pathway. Five of the 10 offenders had offences involving physical contact with a victim of some description whereas five have had non-contact offences. Queensland Corrective Services take these matters very seriously and return these particular offenders swiftly to the Supreme Court and into custody on interim detention orders. Offenders on these orders have strict conditions and intensive supervision. Punishment for breaches can include further conditions on the offender's liberty, jail time or, in the most serious cases, a continued detention order or a return to prison. We saw that recently with a case in Toowoomba where they went back for two years in that particular instance. Further, there is legislation coming forward in relation to the wilful damage of these particular GPS devices. Presently, they may be fined for wilful damage—the same as scratching a park bench. I do not think that that meets community expectation, so we want to bring that up into that 12-month bracket to reflect community views.

Since the introduction of the legislation in 2003, 73 offenders have been returned to the Supreme Court for breaches resulting in order amendments, periods of imprisonment and, in some cases, continuing their detention orders. This government made a commitment to ensure that dangerous sex offenders are GPS tracked if a court bid to have them locked up does not succeed. GPS monitoring is one of the many tools that Queensland Corrective Service staff use to closely monitor and manage this group of offenders. All sex offenders fitted with GPS are tracked on a 24-hour, seven-day basis, with a specialist surveillance team working around the clock to monitor their movements. Queensland has one of the most advanced GPS offender monitoring technologies in Australia and New Zealand. Western Australia has also implemented the same technology.

Before going on, I had the privilege of visiting that covert operational site. We have increased the staff in there over the period of time that we have been in government. I think an extra 10 people have gone into that particular area. The technology and the sheer tracking of these particular offenders is quite impressive. For confidentiality reasons I will not go into it too much, but I am happy if the representative from the opposition would like to attend that facility. If I run that past the director-general, I am sure that may be something that he may want to see. It is very impressive how they are able to monitor these particular individuals. The devices are a one or two track. A one-track



device is a single unit attached to the ankle with a strap while a two-track device has a strap on the anklet and a second device that must be carried by the offender. Both the one- and the two-track devices will provide an alert if the strap is forcibly moved or cut. The two-track device will also provide an alert to Queensland Corrective Services when the two elements are separated.

Since implementation of the GPS technology for Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act offenders in November 2011, five offenders have deliberately removed their devices, resulting in arrest and return to the Supreme Court. The GPS devices are tamper resistant, with up to 30 kilograms of force required to break the straps. Breaking or cutting the straps generates an immediate alert to the central monitoring station. As this particular act falls within the portfolio of the Attorney-General, the Hon. Jarrod Bleijie, I have written to him specifically expressing my belief that stronger penalties for these offences are necessary to protect the community.

The QPS and Queensland Corrective Services provide prompt information to the community through mainstream media, including the dangerous prisoner sexual offender's description, picture and basic offences when there is an unauthorised removal of this device. The Queensland government supports community safety by rigorously releasing information to target members of the public regarding these particular high-risk sex offenders subject to the dangerous prisoners act and Queensland Corrective Services undertakes targeted disclosure with residents and employees on a case-by-case basis. They rapidly disclose information to the Queensland community if an offender removes their anklet or their GPS device and Queensland Corrective Service officers are positioned to determine and manage offenders' risks based on their offending profile and environmental factors. In response to concerns regarding timeliness of the media alert, when a GPS is tampered with or an abscond occurs the department has implemented a new two-stage media notification process. The initial media alert will be provided within 45 minutes, except in exceptional circumstances, and will provide basic offender and offence details upon confirmation that the strap has been tampered with and a breach of curfew and monitoring requirements has occurred.

Further releases will then be made to the community after that, including SMS notifications advising local schools, childcare centres, aged-care facilities and hospitals of the alert. These are in conjunction with the activation of community notifications for the escape of these particular persons or a breach of curfew, or from their contingency accommodation. We have to remember that these people, whether we like it or not, have been given orders from the Supreme Court to go back out into the community. I make no apologies for ensuring the strictest security in relation to these individuals.

Both the departments—the QPS and the QCS—routinely share information to assist in the management of high-risk offenders in the community. This government will continue to review the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act to ensure sufficient protections are in place for all of Queensland. I have my own personal opinions in relation to these particular individuals, but we have to follow the directions of the court system and make sure that we maintain the safety of all members of our great state.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Miss BARTON:** Minister, I note that there have been significant improvements in ambulance services following the implementation of the MEDAI recommendations and the Queensland Ambulance Service structural reform program. I was wondering if you could provide the committee with an update of the latest key performance indicators for these service areas. I note that that is on page 11 of the SDS.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. As I said before, I am very appreciative of the work that the Queensland Ambulance Service does throughout the whole of the state. In 2013-14, there were budget allocations of \$616.214 million towards delivering ambulance services throughout the whole of this state. As I highlighted earlier, an additional 60 ambulance officers will be delivered this year. This is in addition to the 60 that were provided in 2012-13. This increase is a reflection of the government's commitment to meet demand and to improve ambulance services to all Queenslanders. In 2012-13, there was an increase of 6.43 per cent in combined code 1, life-threatening, and code 2, urgent, incidents compared to 2011-12. In 2012-13, 617,729 emergency 000 calls were received. This is an increase of 6.9 per cent from the previous year. Over 90 per cent of those calls were answered by Queensland ambulance communication staff within 10 seconds.

The Queensland Ambulance Service is at the forefront of Australian prehospital emergency care. It is continuing to look at new ways to improve the way it does business. The Queensland Ambulance Service has been working closely with the department of health since the government came to power and is delivering real results.

On 2 August 2012, the Minister for Health tabled the MEDAI report to the House. All 15 recommendations from that report were implemented by 1 January 2013. To date, significant service improvements and system efficiencies have occurred across both the department of health and the Queensland Ambulance Service. For example, patient off-stretcher time data shows a steady improvement in performance. In 2011-12, 80.84 per cent of patients were off-loaded within 30 minutes. In May 2013, 89 per cent of patients were recorded off-stretcher within 30 minutes.

In collaboration with the department of health, QAS is also trialling a new web based application called iPOST, which enables real-time reporting of patient off-stretcher times. The iPOST data provides a performance measure for hospital emergency department access. Further, there has been enhanced clinical coordination between the Queensland Ambulance Service and the department of health during the transfer of patients in hospital emergency departments. The Commissioner of the Queensland Ambulance Service has also implemented structural reform to help streamline the services and improve patient care in the Queensland health system.

On 11 September 2012 the commissioner announced a realignment of the Queensland Ambulance Service from seven regions and 21 area offices to 16 local ambulance service networks. That went remarkably smoothly and it is a great credit to the management of the Queensland Ambulance Service. This model ensures that Queensland Ambulance Service and department of health service delivery are aligned and that this service delivery is reflective of community needs.

The most recent report of government service data shows that Queensland has the fastest response times for the 50th and 90th percentiles when compared to comparable jurisdictions like New South Wales and Western Australia. The results were 8.3 minutes and 17 minutes respectively. This is something of which I am truly proud as the minister. Queensland is a large, decentralised state and achieving these results proves that Queensland is on the right track.

In the 2012-13 year, further response time improvements were achieved. Fifty per cent of code 1, life-threatening, incidents were attended within 8.2 minutes and 90 per cent within 16.5 minutes. Our paramedics, communications officers, patient transport officers and volunteers are doing a great job, and I congratulate them on a job well done. It is no wonder that, yet again, paramedics were voted the most trusted professionals in the latest *Reader's Digest* survey.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bulimba.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Minister, I understand that there are several organisations around the state that benefit from the community service program within Queensland Corrective Services. Can you please outline to the committee the contribution offenders are making to the community through this important program?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. I would like to ask the director-general to answer that question.

**Mr Anderson:** If it is permissible, I will respond on behalf of the minister. Reparation, or community service, is a vital part of corrections. Putting offenders to work gives them the opportunity to repay some of the damage they have caused. It also teaches them the value of an honest day's work and provides skills for them to use in future employment. Reparation provides the community with a source of labour for work that would otherwise not be completed. That is an important point, because the work done through Corrective Services does not take the work of other paid workers.

In 2012-13, as at 31 May, a total of 403,637 hours of community service had been completed. The value of this community service equates to approximately \$8.67 million. Community service has been used for a variety of tasks, but the one that we have focused much on tonight has been to assist in flood recovery efforts. After ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald alone, work parties completed 3,664 hours, and probation and parole offenders completed a further 1,485 hours of community service, which conservatively is costed at \$113,000.

Community service completed through probation and parole occurs through engagement with local councils and not-for-profit organisations. Community service work involves but is not limited to public space clean-up and assisting organisations such as Lifeline or the Salvation Army to sort and distribute donations. As published in the Service Delivery Statement, the 2012-13 estimate for

financial value for community service work performed—that is work ordered by the court—was greater than \$6.2 million. In 2012-13, as at 31 May 2013, a total of 266,210 hours of community service was completed, and that approximated \$5.7 million.

One of the important aspects of community service has been graffiti removal. Graffiti removal projects were implemented in the Cairns district office in 2009 and then later at the Southport district office in 2011—and again working with those respective councils. In 2012-13, as at the end of May, 2,944 hours of graffiti removal activity had been completed between those two areas. That equates to \$64,768. Those programs have involved 193 offenders who are paying back to the community by cleaning up this antisocial behaviour. Probation and Parole continues to seek partnerships with councils in order to use the GraffitiSTOP funding provided by this government in developing graffiti removal projects state-wide.

In 2012-13, there were 13 work camp locations, with an average daily state—that is muster, if you like—of approximately 129 prisoners. Those work camps included the Lotus Glen Correctional Centre, which supervises a work camp at Innisfail for male prisoners and the Townsville correctional complex, which has male work camps at Boulia, Winton and Julia Creek. It also has a female work camp at Bowen. The Capricornia Correctional Centre has a male work camp at Blackall, Clermont and Springsure. The Palen Creek Correctional Centre has male work camps at Charleville, Mitchell, St George and Dirranbandi. The Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre has a female work camp at Warwick. Work camps provide a valuable support to regional communities through the completion of projects that may not have otherwise been done. Anyone who has attended any of those locations well away from Brisbane will realise that a lot of the work that is done—paving, the building of fences around recreation reserves et cetera—takes an enormous drain off those local communities.

Prisoners eligible for work camps are stringently assessed on an eligibility creature. That includes their security classification, the offence type and the whether the prisoners are subject to drug and alcohol testing. The supervisors of the camps continually monitor prisoner behaviour and look for things of concern such as the potential for escape, violence or substance abuse. If any concerns are raised, those prisoners are returned to the correctional centre.

In the Service Delivery Statement the financial value of the work performed in the community by prisoners from low-security facilities in 2012-13 is less than the targeted estimate of \$3.2 million, but only missed the target with an annual estimated at \$3 million. A decrease in low-security prisoner numbers impacted on Corrective Services' ability to meet that target, but as at 31 May 2013 prisoners from the low-security facilities, including work camps, completed a total of 137,427 hours of community work. That equated to \$2.97 million in work value.

Community service completed by work camps often involves maintenance and landscaping work in public areas, event clean-up and the preparation of sites for community events. We are continually encouraging QCS to identify community service projects as a way of ensuring that offenders are able, and indeed required, to pay back to the Queensland community against which they have offended.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Obviously, prisoners have had a great deal to do with assisting in the clean-up after the floods in the cane fields in Bundaberg as well as cleaning up debris on beaches, which assisted surf-lifesaving. I have visited Lotus Glen in the Cairns area a number of times and I have seen the great work they are doing up there—as well as at the Bowen and the Charleville work camps. They are well received by the communities. Every council wants one of these groups but, as a government, we are not prepared to put it in until everything has been crossed and dotted, because I cannot afford the reputation, or the security, or the perception in the community in relation to these camps to be lowered in any way, shape or form. We set a high standard and we have to make sure that they do not fail. Obviously, there is the benefit of stopping the recidivism of the offender. These work camps also assist in reminding people that this government's focus is on the victim and that the victim's rights are first and foremost. If you go to jail I expect you go there to work, and that is it. The days of the offender's rights coming first are no longer.

**CHAIR:** I understand. Member for Rockhampton?

**Mr BYRNE:** Minister, with reference to DCS SDS page 13 and estimates question on notice No. 14, the question on notice indicates that every suburb in Queensland with the need is able to be reached by external high-rise rescue equipment within 14 minutes. I note that the average time to respond to a fire at Airlie Beach is over 16 minutes. Will the minister indicate if people on the fifth floor can be rescued in Airlie Beach within 14 minutes by external fire rescue equipment?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. Obviously in this portfolio there are things that are taken into account on a daily basis and one of them in particular is the strict building codes that we have in relation to high-rise buildings right across the state. In answer to the question on notice, it stated at this time there are no high-rise buildings outside the 14-minute response time for urban crews with the exception of Hamilton Island which has its own private fire fighting capacity. In relation to the technicalities I will turn to the director-general.

**Mr Anderson:** I immediately pass to the Commissioner who will have the detail.

**Commissioner Johnson:** In relation to the question, it was in relation to high-rise rescue equipment, and from Fire and Rescue's point of view and our data, based on that data we believe there are 268 buildings with seven or more levels within the QFRS 14-minute response time. About 75 per cent of those are in Brisbane and it is important in terms of the question that the Urban Land Development Authority, the ULDA, guideline No. 8 defines high-rise buildings as those that are seven storeys or more. All high-rise buildings are built subject to the requirements of the Building Code of Australia. So, one of the triggers within that environment is additional safety features that come with the Building Code when a building is over 25 metres in effective height. That generally triggers, for example, the compulsory requirement to put sprinklers in. Buildings constructed to BCA above 25 metres effective height will have some or all additional special fire services such as I mentioned before such as sprinklers, pressurised stairwells and lift shafts, smoke exhaust systems and, obviously, alarm and detection systems and storage tanks for fire fighting water. Additional special fire services depend on the class and use of the building, whether they be an apartment or an office or a motel, whatever particular building class they are.

The important thing to note is that firefighters using the building's special fire service is the most effective and viable means of combatting fires in high-rise buildings. We have well established procedures for that. Firefighters, where there are high-rise buildings, carry with them the high-rise rescue equipment that is needed to do the job. The reality is that a building which is high-rise in nature actually requires internal fire fighting and not external fire fighting. An example of that would be, for example, in the city here, an 88-storey building currently being built in Herschell Street and there is no ladder or telescopic ladder platform that would reach that. We do not rely on that. The most prominent use of aerial fire fighting appliances is actually what we call water tower or large volume amounts of water for fire fighting. So, for high-rise fires the actual effective fire fighting technique is to take breaking and entering forcible entry equipment, breathing apparatus, high-rise packs into the building and use the special fire services to fight the fire. We do have a number of aerial appliances right across Queensland, from Cairns to the Gold Coast, and they assist in warehouse fires and things like that, but actually undertaking life rescue is a fairly rare event. The basis of the answer really is that for high-rise buildings we actually require firefighters to fight them internally using the systems.

**Mr BYRNE:** Thanks, Commissioner. Minister, through you, how many firefighters are normally available to attend a potential high-rise fire at Airlie Beach and even though you mentioned some of the specialised equipment, what have they actually got there, what apparatus is able to deal with rescuing or whatever else happens with tourists in a five or six or whatever storey building at Airlie Beach?

**Commissioner Johnson:** My understanding is that there are no high-rise buildings in Airlie Beach.

**Mr BYRNE:** Seven storeys, are you saying, is the definition of a high-rise building?

**Commissioner Johnson:** Seven and above is the definition of a high-rise building. There are four permanent officers at Airlie Beach and 19 auxiliary staff on the establishment there. They would use their high-rise pack, their breathing apparatus, their normal equipment that is carried on fire pumpers to get into the building and fight the fire.

**Mr BYRNE:** Thanks, Commissioner. Minister, the DCS SDS page 13 is the reference. I refer to comments made by Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Assistant Commissioner Mitchell. With reference to the Cathedral Place building fire that cost \$8.8 million he conceded that, 'Periodic staffing cutbacks could have added three minutes or more to the response time of early back-up trucks had they been in effect on the day of the fire.' I ask the minister: if a fully engulfed fire was left to burn for an extra, say, five minutes because of periodic staffing cutbacks in a building like the Valley fire, what would be the effect?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** I thank the member for the question. I understand that there is no particular reference to the SDS in there.

**Mr BYRNE:** SDS page 13.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** It is a long straw in relation to that particular one.

**Mr BYRNE:** I can find it, don't worry about that.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** But I am happy to answer it because I had the privilege of being on the scene of the Cathedral Place incident when it was occurring. I always make the effort, whenever I go to fire stations right across the whole of the state, to shake the hands of as many fire officers as I can to say thank you for the work that they do. I was very impressed on the ground. I was lucky enough to be in the presence of the commissioner and for him to exhibit the work of his officers. I could see that he was very proud of that. But for me as the minister to get an on-the-ground appreciation of the coordinated approach in which fire officers work as well as on the scene with the Queensland Ambulance Service and the Queensland Police Service, it was quite outstanding to see the professionalism and the equipment that they had. That has only come together through the great work that is done by the service itself in making sure it has those types of appliances. For the particular incident's details, if it is all right I will get the Commissioner to answer.

**Commissioner Johnson:** I also attended the Cathedral Place fire and was delighted to hear that the minister was going to turn up at the scene.

**CHAIR:** With his hat on.

**Commissioner Johnson:** No, I had the hat on. The quotation you gave from the Assistant Commissioner, I am not aware of those exact words. However, I do know there was some media that certainly made statements alleged to belong to Assistant Commissioner Mitchell, but those words do not ring true. The response to the Cathedral Place fire was within minutes. The Kemp Place Fire Station is right there. When we do occasionally have a shortage of staff it would not have affected the response. Only once in I think at least 10 years have we actually closed a fire station and that was at Enoggera recently for a day shift. It has plenty of coverage. We have overlapping coverage of stations in Brisbane and I do not see that it would have added any inordinate response delays to that particular fire or into the inner city.

**Mr BYRNE:** Thanks, Commissioner.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Just in closing, because that incident is significant, I would like to put on the record the great work that was done by the fire warden at the Cathedral Place establishment. He did a magnificent job. There is no doubt that his actions saved the lives of many people. I give great credit to him.

**Mr BYRNE:** Thanks, Minister. I am not trying to put the Assistant Commissioner in any sort of bomb site here. These words hardly seem to me to be words that your average journo would be digging up to use. I am sure we can find the exact source, but I find it interesting that that language would be used by somebody, whether it is a quasi informed journalist or someone associated with the fire service. I think it is a real issue. I appreciate your answer to it.

**CHAIR:** I do not think we can take that much further when we are talking about the language of journalists.

**Mr BYRNE:** With reference to the DCS SDS page 5, Director-General, I am happy to take the first three on notice because I understand they would require a bit of digging around. It has to do with the budget and any program or budgeted item that has been underspent in the 2012-13 budget and how much money those programs were underspent individually; what was the dollar value handed back to consolidated revenue from budget savings required by the government in 2012-13; and how much money is budgeted to be saved and/or handed back in the budget 2013-14? Is there a dedicated efficiency dividend existing within the department? Those three can be taken on notice. I do not need to have that now.

**Mr DEMPSEY:** We have that here if you need it.

**Mr BYRNE:** Have you? You are organised. What I am really keen to know, and the punchline is—which I assume you are able to speak to—how much of the underspend out of the last budget was attributed to any failure to pay predicted wage rises to various employees? You can take that on notice, too, if you want.

**Mr Anderson:** We might have to take that on notice. Can I just say it is not a failure to pay anyone. If we are in the process of negotiating enterprise bargain agreements et cetera then the wage just wouldn't have been passed through, but we would need to do a calculation because there are so many classes of staff that work for us.

**Mr BYRNE:** I am happy for you to do that.

**Mr Anderson:** If I could just have one minute I might just ask the chief financial officer if she has it at her fingertips. Could we take that on notice? We will need to do some detailed calculations.

**Mr BYRNE:** No problem. I can't wait.

**CHAIR:** That is not your backdoor method of getting questions on notice, is it?

**Mr BYRNE:** We will see.

**CHAIR:** No, indeed. Thank you. 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. That closes this estimates. I want to make some closing comments. I would like to thank Angie and Judy for supplying the water. I would certainly like to thank Mr Sound Recordist, Messrs Hansard and in particular thanks to Brook, Ali and Kim. We very much appreciate your assistance. In particular I thank the members of the committee for what I believe to have been a seamless day. It has been a long day. The way in which it was conducted certainly made my job a lot easier so I thank you for that. Minister, do you want to give a concluding statement?

**Mr DEMPSEY:** Just very briefly I would like to thank you, Mr Chairman, and members of the committee for the way in which these estimates were conducted. It is a great privilege for us as a department to be able to give you forthright, full and transparent answers in a full and encompassing way. I would like to thank my director-general, the many commissioners and acting commissioners that we have, Darlene, my assistant here on the side who does a magnificent job, and all the other members from the Department of Community Safety who have come here. I thank the Hansard reporters in particular. I know the difficulties with having to put up with us MPs at this time of the evening, which they do remarkably well.

**CHAIR:** I was about to say I thought the Acting Commissioner, Queensland Corrective Services, got off fairly lightly.

**Committee adjourned at 9.15 pm**