

TUESDAY, 15 JULY 2014

ESTIMATES—FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE—PREMIER AND CABINET


Estimate Committee Members

Mr SW Davies (Chair)
Mr CW Pitt
Mrs EA Cunningham
Dr B Flegg
Mr R Gulley
Mrs FK Ostapovitch
Mr MA Stewart

In Attendance

Hon. CKT Newman, Premier
Mr B Myers, Chief of Staff, Office of the Premier
Mr M Prain, Director, Policy, Office of the Premier
Department of the Premier and Cabinet
Mr J Grayson, Director-General
Public Service Commission
Mr A Chesterman, Commission Chief Executive
Queensland Family and Child Commission
Mr S Armitage, Principal Commissioner
Queensland Audit Office
Mr A Greaves, Auditor-General
Office of the Integrity Commissioner
Mr R Bingham, Integrity Commissioner
Office of the Governor
Mr M Gower OAM, Official Secretary

Committee met at 9.00 am

 **CHAIR:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I declare the Finance and Administration Committee's public hearing for the examination of the Appropriation Bill 2014 open. This is the first of two public hearings to be conducted. On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Premier, departmental officers and members of the public.

I am Steve Davies, the member for Capalaba and the chair of the committee. Joining me on the committee are: Mr Curtis Pitt MP, deputy chair and member for Mulgrave; Mrs Liz Cunningham MP, member for Gladstone; Dr Bruce Flegg MP, member for Moggill; Mr Reg Gulley MP, member for Murrumba; Mrs Freya Ostapovitch MP, member for Stretton; and Mr Mark Stewart MP, member for Sunnybank. The committee has also given leave for other members to participate in the hearing today, and I welcome Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Leader of the Opposition and member for Inala.

The committee will now examine the Appropriation Bill 2014 and the estimates for the areas of responsibility administered by the Premier. The committee will consider the estimates for the portfolio until 5 pm. The committee will suspend proceedings for the following breaks: at 10.15 am, resuming at 10.45 am; at 12 pm, resuming at 1.15 pm; and at 2.45 pm, resuming at 3.15 pm.

In this first session the committee will consider the estimates for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Office of the Governor. The proceedings today are lawful proceedings and subject to the standing rules and orders of the Queensland parliament. As such, I remind all visitors that any person admitted to this hearing may be excluded by order of the committee in accordance with standing order 208.

In relation to media coverage of the hearing, the committee has resolved to allow television film coverage and photography at all times during the hearing in accordance with the media broadcasting rules. The committee's hearing is being broadcast live via the Parliamentary Service's website and to receivers throughout the parliamentary precinct. Before we begin, I ask that all mobile phones be either switched off or turned to silent mode, and I remind you that no calls are to be taken inside the hearing room. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask advisers, if you are called to give an answer, to please state your name before speaking.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Premier open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Premier, the committee has resolved that you may make an opening statement of no more than five minutes. Do you wish to do so?

Mr NEWMAN: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. It is a delight to appear before this committee today, so I will get right into it. This budget is about continuing to deliver on two things that I am most focused on: creating jobs for Queenslanders, supercharging the Queensland economy, and making this the best-performing state government in the nation.

A budget is always a tough balancing act. It is a tougher balancing act when you are standing on a fiscal cliff that you have inherited from a former government. With an \$80 billion debt hanging over us, which is costing Queensland \$4 billion a year—that is, every man, woman and child bears that burden—we had to strike the right balance between getting the right front-line services and being fiscally responsible.

I make some points here. We have increased expenditure on health, on education and on front-line policing, and we have not increased taxes or introduced new taxes. We have been able to do this because of the strong decisions we made over the past two budgets—the responsible decisions that had to be taken to actually sort out the issues that we inherited when we came to government. This budget builds on the strong plan that we have developed for Queensland. We want this state to have a bright future, and indeed the state will have a bright future because of the responsible position we have taken.

We want all Queenslanders to have the opportunity to participate in the economy and prosper. That is why our focus continues to be on building a four-pillar economy. We are particularly focused of course on agriculture, resources, construction and tourism, and we are going to continue the work to transform the Queensland Public Service to make sure that we put the people of Queensland first. It is working. The reforms, the renewal processes that we have had underway, are delivering revitalised front-line services for Queenslanders, and you can see that right across the range of government departments.

To give you just three examples of how things have changed since we came to government: we have seen a 74 per cent reduction in the number of category 1 long-wait surgery patients over the last two years, from 197 in March 2012 to 51 in March 2014. Let's have a look at the dental long-wait list. It has been completely cleared. Today there is next to no-one who has been waiting for two years or more for general dental care compared with 62,513 back in February 2013. What about the long-wait list for social housing? That has been reduced by 37 per cent by this government. Just last week—because we are not resting on our laurels—the health minister and I announced a blitz on the ophthalmology waiting list, which will see that waiting list, on which 11,000 Queenslanders have been waiting too long, eliminated by 30 June next year.

We have also put in place a program which we committed to—our Mums and Bubs program—to ensure that mums and dads are supported when they have a new baby. In the past 12 months almost 9,000 mums just on the north side of Brisbane alone have used our Mums and Bubs service, which means that they can get home more quickly and have access to support in their homes.

When it comes to the health professionals who work in our hospitals, I note that our nurses and midwives who work very hard of course have had almost a 10 per cent pay increase across the board since we came to office just over two years ago, and more than a quarter of all nurses now are paid over \$100,000 a year. Why? Because we support the work that they do and they should be remunerated appropriately.

In relation to public transport, we have more services, we have more services running on time and we have introduced free trips after nine journeys have been taken in a week.

Creating the best Public Service in Australia and supercharging the economy are closely linked. There is virtually nothing that business can do that is not related to some sort of government regulation. We have said that Queensland is open for business, and we have made that a reality by cutting red tape and bureaucracy and speeding up approvals processes. We are the only state with a one-stop shop for development applications.

The business changes that we have made are working. In the past 12 months more than 60,000 jobs—I think it is actually about 65,000 jobs if I recall correctly—were created in Queensland, and for the past 18 months Queensland has been in the enviable position of creating more jobs than the rest of Australia combined. I point to the latest Property Council/ANZ Property Industry Confidence Survey, which shows that Queensland has achieved a record sixth consecutive quarter of positive ratings. Queensland is the only state to have done so in the history of the survey. Business confidence has returned to Queensland and it is actually riding high.

We want this to be the best state in Australia to live, work and raise a family, and this budget continues to deliver on that. We also want Queensland to be the best place to educate a child. That is why we have increased spending on education by seven per cent in this budget. We have directed the funding towards teacher quality, improving school autonomy and enhancing student discipline. Our Great Teachers = Great Results action plan is about making sure our kids are taught by the best and brightest teachers. This budget funds an extra 761 teachers and teacher aides and delivers 10 new schools with a \$1.38 billion public-private partnership.

We also want Queenslanders to have the best free public health system in the nation. In a time of severe financial restraints we have put the health of Queenslanders first. Since 2011-12 we have increased spending on health by a massive 18.6 per cent. We have committed \$2 billion more to health than the previous government did in their last budget. We also want Queensland to be the safest place to raise a child. The most significant new policy item in this budget is an overhaul of the child protection system. We are implementing the recommendations of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry, conducted by our now Chief Justice, Tim Carmody. We are investing \$406 million over five years to better protect Queensland's most precious resource of all—our children.

But it is not just education, health and child protection that will benefit from this budget. We are also continuing to deliver on law and order commitments. An extra 267 police officers will be funded this year as part of our promise to provide 1,100 extra police over four years. This budget also provides a \$44.5 million injection into Australia's most comprehensive action plan to stamp out alcohol and drug related violence. The Safe Night Out Strategy is about making sure Queensland is the safest place in Australia for people to go out and enjoy themselves. We will soon be rolling out compulsory drug and alcohol education to students from grades 7 to 12 to tackle the culture of drinking early.

When it comes to the cost of living we are very much—very much—aware of the cost-of-living pressures on all Queenslanders, particularly pensioners and older Queenslanders. That is why in this budget we acted quickly and decisively to reinstate the full level of pensioner and senior concessions. We have delivered on our election promise by continuing to scrap \$7,000 of extra tax that Labor put on the purchase of one's own home. We introduced a \$15,000 Great Start Grant for first home buyers, which has been highly successful for young Queenslanders and the building industry. We also froze family car rego. It continues to be frozen in this budget for the third successive year. In this budget we have continued to support rural and regional Queenslanders with \$683 million in subsidies so that they continue to pay the same electricity prices as people living in South-East Queensland, in the Brisbane area and in the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast areas, and that is despite significantly higher costs to supply to more remote areas.

Infrastructure also features prominently in this budget. After more than two decades of talking, planning and scoping, it is now full steam ahead for the Toowoomba second range crossing. The call has now gone out for expressions of interest from the private sector to partner with the Queensland

government and the federal government to build this vital infrastructure. It also reinforces our strong commitment to fixing Queensland's 1,700-kilometre lifeline—of course I am referring to the Bruce Highway. That includes \$768 million worth of improvements this financial year to the Bruce Highway. To be able to fund infrastructure in the future we must have a plan to reduce debt. I am just winding up, Mr Chairman. That is why this budget also outlines our draft plan to reduce debt by \$25 billion to around \$55 billion through a series of asset transactions.

In summary, this is a very responsible and sound budget. It is a budget for the future. It is a budget we have mapped out together with Queenslanders. On 31 July I will be releasing the Queensland Plan, and it is the result of input from 80,000 Queenslanders telling us what they want their state to look like in the next 30 years. It is truly a people's plan. It is the way forward to make sure that Queensland truly is the best place to live, work and raise a family. I just again emphasise that this government has a strong plan for Queensland's bright future and we have a responsible budget to get us there.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Premier. I now call on the member for Inala to commence the questioning.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much, Chair. My first question is to Mr Grayson. Mr Grayson, I refer to page 1 of the SDS, supporting and advising the Premier and cabinet ministers and agencies to ensure the structure and processes of government run efficiently. Can the director-general confirm reports in the media about the release of personal information of Queensland Health employee Dr Anthony Lynham?

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, if I may interject—

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, I am asking the director-general.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I refer to the standing orders. I refer to standing order 180(1)(a)—

the Chairperson is to call on the estimates of the proposed expenditure for the area of responsibility which the committee is to examine and declare the proposed expenditure open for examination ...

The questions are meant to be about the proposed expenditure. I would seek your guidance on whether that is relevant to the duties and responsibilities of this committee hearing today.

Ms PALASZCZUK: This is extremely relevant to the processes of government. This is an estimates process. This is extremely relevant. What are you hiding?

CHAIR: I personally do not see how that has any relevance to the estimates process at all.

Ms PALASZCZUK: This clearly has relevance. I am referring to the SDS and my question is to the director-general. I am allowed to ask the director-general questions in this estimates process.

CHAIR: Regarding the estimates. This is a political question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is the Public Service. He is in charge of the Public Service. I am asking about the Public Service.

CHAIR: I rule that question out of order.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is incredible. This government is hiding. It does not want to answer questions.

CHAIR: This is an estimates hearing. The relevance of the question to appropriations is what needs to be considered.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, if it helps the committee, I would be very happy if you wanted to adjourn so the Leader of the Opposition could seek guidance from the Clerk on this matter. I have no objection to an adjournment.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We can do that during the break. I can move on. My question is to the Premier. Premier, in your opening statement you said that you wanted to transform the Public Service and you wanted to put people first. Can the Premier please detail to the estimates hearing how many public servants have been sacked since he came to office?

Mr NEWMAN: Thank you, Mr Chairman. That is a good question. I will get the precise figures. Firstly, in response, I need to give some context. Over the 10 years prior to this government coming to office, the annual average increase in expenditure of the Queensland government was 8.9 per cent, if I recall correctly. So what I am saying is that every year on average for a decade government expenditures went up, on average, by 8.9 per cent. Who was paying for that? The people of Queensland were paying for that through higher taxes and charges. The current Leader of the

Opposition knows full well that there were very significant increases in taxes and charges to try to pay for that. Despite increasing taxes and charges quite significantly—for example, motor vehicle registration went through the roof; we went from being one of the cheapest states to, if I recall correctly, being the most expensive state—the debt went up very significantly. If I recall the last Labor budget of 2011, the former Treasurer Andrew Fraser projected that debt would peak at about \$85 billion. I am very conscious that we could go and look at the former budget papers that would bear that out. We had to get control of costs. We had to do that, Mr Chairman. We could not allow the wasteful spending and the out-of-control expenditure to occur because it hurts Queenslanders. Right now the debt that we have inherited from Labor means that the men and women of Queensland are paying \$450,000 an hour. It is staggering, isn't it?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Do we have the answer?

Mr NEWMAN: \$450,000 an hour could build a social house for a family on the social housing waiting list—\$450,000 an hour.

Ms PALASZCZUK: With all due respect, Chair, it was a pretty specific question.

CHAIR: The Premier is answering the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Well I don't believe he is.

CHAIR: He said he was giving some context. He is giving the context.

Ms PALASZCZUK: He wants to avoid the question.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, we have all day. We have a lot more time to ask questions and have them answered today than under the old system—

Ms PALASZCZUK: You won't even let your director-general answer my questions.

CHAIR: Please let the Premier answer the question without interrupting.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I thought the procedure was that comments were to be directed through the chair, and I intend to respect those processes today of the parliament.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: The context is important. We had to take action. So the government took action to control costs. I am happy to report to the committee that in the first full year of government under my leadership costs went up by only 0.2 per cent. Why is that important to Queenslanders? It is important to Queenslanders because it is their money. They are the ones at the end of the day who pay for government.

In terms of the question, going directly now to the numbers, I do need to take issue. The question had a statement about sackings. In the main, as I clearly recall, we did not sack people. We offered voluntary redundancies. A total of 12,299 people chose to take voluntary redundancies. There were 52 retrenchments after all placement efforts were exhausted. I hope that helps the member with the question. I point out the very important reason for these actions. At the end of the day, in every single case we tried to deal with people decently, carefully and responsibly to try to assist them out of the Public Service. At the end of the day, we had to make these decisions so that we would not see more cost-of-living pressures on Queensland families and we would not see the debt continue to escalate.

CHAIR: One more question, member for Inala.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much, Chair. Premier, I refer to the SDS which states that the DPC is responsible for the following services delivered through portfolio areas: policy advice, coordination and cabinet support. I refer the Premier to pages 2 and 3 of the 2014-15 *Concessions Statement*, which was released as part of the budget. In particular, I refer to the section titled 'Termination of Australian Government Assistance to Pensioners and Seniors Card Holders'. Premier, was it your idea to pass on these cuts to Queensland pensioners?

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I am going to be here today answering questions about what the government has done. I am not going to get into the deliberative processes because—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Well whose idea was it to cut the pensioners' concessions? Was it your idea, the Treasurer's idea or the Deputy Premier's idea? We just want to know.

CHAIR: The Premier is answering.

Mr NEWMAN: Thanks, Mr Chairman. The Leader of the Opposition used to be a member of cabinet and would understand there is a document called the *Cabinet Handbook*. The *Cabinet Handbook* sets out how government at cabinet level will be conducted in the state of Queensland. Decisions are made by the cabinet and the cabinet takes collective responsibility for decisions. That is

the way it has worked for 150 years based on the proud traditions of Westminster, and that is the way it will continue to work while I am the Premier of this state. I am not going to get into the issue about the decision-making processes of cabinet or any cabinet committee. Suffice to say, as the leader of the cabinet I enthusiastically and wholeheartedly support the decisions of the cabinet.

In relation to the matter at hand, we think it right and proper to ensure that pensioners and seniors—people who have worked hard to give us the Queensland that we have today; people who are either on pensions or on superannuation payout arrangements who have in most cases very modest means—should be supported as much as possible. That is why this government has provided very significant support to them. In contrast, and I go back to my answer before, the former government put huge pressures on all Queenslanders including seniors. Those who sit next to you today, unfortunately, were part of a cabinet—the member for Mulgrave and the Leader of the Opposition—who made Queensland have the highest motor vehicle registration in Australia.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We did not attack pensioners.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I am trying to answer these questions. I know that the Leader of the Opposition wants fulsome answers today, and I am giving fulsome answers because that is what Queenslanders expect.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Great.

CHAIR: Member for Inala, just let the Premier comment.

Mr NEWMAN: The other things they did is they removed the 8c a litre fuel subsidy. They made a solemn promise that it would stay prior to the 2009 election and then only a few weeks later they broke their promise. Along with their federal colleagues they essentially supported the introduction of a carbon tax. We know that electricity prices this year will only go up 5.1 per cent as opposed to over 13 per cent if the carbon tax goes, but the Labor Party in the federal parliament and in our state parliament continue to support a tax that puts huge cost-of-living pressures on families. They removed very significant and appropriately generous stamp duty concessions on family homes.

In that budget I referred to before, in 2011 Mr Andrew Fraser, a colleague of the now Leader of the Opposition, put \$7,000 extra tax on the family home. They bungled the water reforms. Back in 2007 as a local government official I warned South-East Queenslanders that huge water price increases were on their way. These people had the gall at the time—go back and look at their statements—to proudly proclaim how much the price of water would increase. If memory serves me correctly, there is information from the former Water Commission website but certainly government media releases at the time proclaiming the huge increases in water prices. That was March-April 2007. There was a slight adjustment, I acknowledge, later that year but it barely dented what is now transpiring.

There was also the announced increase of 15 per cent each year for five years in terms of public transport fares. The Leader of the Opposition during that period of time was a transport minister who presided over a policy that said, 'We will put up fares 15 per cent, then 15 per cent, then 15 per cent,' and they said that they would then go up 15 per cent and 15 per cent. In the last two years since coming to office, we have halved those increases.

Finally, I cannot not refer to the over \$1 billion wasted on the Health payroll system. When you waste a billion dollars or more on a payroll system, what does that mean? It means patients cannot be treated. It means elderly people who are waiting for an important ophthalmology consult on their eyes—and I referred to this in my opening statement—cannot get it. It means a hip replacement operation cannot be done. It means that emergency departments do not have the proper set-up and staffing to perform properly. If we are going to talk costs of living, let us have the right context today.

In conclusion, we were proud and pleased not only to take the pressure off all Queenslanders' costs of living by keeping government expenditures under control but also to support our seniors and pensioners by ensuring the shortfall from the federal government decision was met by this government.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. The member for Murrumba has a question.

Mr GULLEY: My question is to the Premier. I refer to page 2 of the DPC Service Delivery Statement. Can the Premier provide an overview of improvements in key service delivery areas like education, health and policing that have been delivered by your can-do government to date and how these results will contribute to a brighter future for Queensland?

Mr NEWMAN: I want to thank the member for his question because, as I indicated in my opening statement, the government is about two things. The first thing we are about is supercharging the Queensland economy, and the other thing we are about is revitalising front-line services. There are another three pledges I made as well and I am happy to talk about them during the course of the day.

The things that we have done in the past two years give me great pride in the performance of the government and where we are going. There is a lot more to do, and we want to do more and we are going to do more. We continue to look for ways to further revitalise front-line services, but after the years of neglect by the Australian Labor Party we are seeing us well and truly on the road, if I can put it that way, to delivering the best Public Service in the nation. I want to really impress upon that to Queenslanders who are watching via the web today. We are about protecting you, serving you and giving you an organisation that is the best. I am not saying we are the best today; I am saying that is where we want to go, that is what we are about. You will not actually hear this from other political leaders in Australia—and I am conscious that some of them are from my own side of politics—but that is what we are about and the results are starting to speak for themselves.

Let us look at some of the front-line service improvements. Firstly, there are approximately 800 extra police on the beat right now. We are introducing rapid action and patrol police hubs, and that delivers more police officers directly to the area of need. The first one has been established on the Gold Coast and a second one is being established in Townsville. We are introducing and rolling out iPads and iPhones which means that front-line police officers have direct access to all sorts of information, databases et cetera, and they also have the ability to fill in reports while they are on the beat so they do not have to go back to the office—that means more time out there on the beat. There are the two police helicopters that we promised, which those who sit on the committee were part of resisting—I am talking about the Labor members.

What do we see now that we have given the system more police and now that we have given the police the tools to do the job? Since October 2013 it is reported that break-ins are down by 23 per cent, and I would just point to today's *Courier-Mail*. Here is the paper, but here is what the Police Commissioner is saying in the article titled 'Criminal reforms pay off: top cop'. The paper reported—

Crime in Queensland dropped at least 10 per cent in the past financial year, according to Police Commissioner Ian Stewart, who attributed the fall to sweeping reforms and a crackdown on bikies.

So do not take my word for it. The Police Commissioner and his team are doing a superb job. Some of the other initiatives in the space include the fact that 113 young people have now taken part in boot camps, and the results there are very, very promising. There has been a 100 per cent non-reoffending rate for young people who have taken part in the Lincoln Springs and Rockhampton camps, and some of them are now working in work placements and I hope that continues.

CHAIR: That is great.

Mr NEWMAN: If I turn to education: there are an extra 761 new teachers and teacher aides provided for in this budget; also, 80 schools will have greater autonomy under the Independent Public Schools program; we will see continued expenditures towards the aggregate amount of \$300 million to clear the maintenance backlog we were left with by the Australian Labor Party; Great Teachers = Great Results means that over a four-year period, as I recall, there is \$537 million to improve the skills of teachers, principals and vice-principals; there is the federal money in the Great Results Guarantee, where \$131 million is going directly to the schools—there is no clipping of the ticket by the department on the way through; the money is going there directly; and every school has a plan to get each child to the national minimum standard for literacy and numeracy, but it is all about the school coming up with that plan.

I turn to health. The budget is up another six per cent; it is now \$13.6 billion, as you heard in my opening statement. That is 18.6 per cent higher than when Labor left office. The percentage of category 1, urgent patients, who receive their surgery within the clinically recommended 30 days has increased under my LNP government team. It is up from 86 per cent, as it was under Labor, to 93 per cent under the LNP. If we turn to category 2, semi-urgent—that is a 90-day clinically recommended time—it was 73 per cent under Labor and it is now 78 per cent under the LNP. The total number of patients who have waited longer than the clinically recommended times for their surgery has been dramatically reduced under the LNP government. It is down from 6,485 at the change of government to 2,842. The percentage of emergency department patients in Queensland whose stay was less than four hours has improved from 63 per cent in March 2012 to 77 per cent as at May 2014. In June 2014

there were no Queenslanders—that is a bit out there, Mr Chairman; I am sure there would be one or two, I would have to say, but this is essentially what the statistics show—waiting more than two years for general dental care, which is down from 62,513 in February 2013.

In all that we do, we are about putting Queenslanders first. Every single day we are working to make this government perform for Queenslanders. They are our masters; we are their servants and we are working for them every single day. That is the way I approach government. I am a servant of the people and I am proud to be that.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. The member for Sunnybank has a question.

Mr STEWART: I have a question for the Premier, and I refer to page 7 of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's SDS in relation to the legislative reform agenda. Can the Premier please explain how the legislative reform being undertaken by the government is making our communities safer by improving our justice system?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the member for that question as well, and I know he has taken a strong interest in these issues while he has been a parliamentarian. I stress that the government has been focused on improving the justice system in Queensland through a range of legislative reform, including tougher penalties, increased penalty units and an offender levy, increased sentencing options for judges and the youth boot camps which I referred to before. The reforms are about protecting the community. That is what we are about. It is also about diverting and deterring would-be offenders and young people from being caught up in the justice system.

I will turn to some of the specific reforms, and the first is the new levy on any offender sentenced in a Queensland court to help pay for the cost of law enforcement and administration. There is also the trial of the appointment of justices of the peace to help the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, QCAT, to hear and adjudicate some of the minor civil disputes. The trial aims to provide access to swift and fair justice by reducing time and costs associated with these minor disputes and reducing backlogs. Then there is the Safe Night Out Strategy which increases the police powers and responsibilities and provides safe and supportive spaces in safe night precincts to deal with alcohol and drug related violence and restore responsible behaviour and respect.

There is a Blueprint for the Future of Youth Justice which will create safer communities and give young people the best chance in life. Key features of the blueprint include early intervention and diversion from a life of crime via youth boot camps, managing the demand for youth justice services and effective sentencing options that include increased options to manage repeat and high-risk offenders.

On 8 May 2014 the Criminal Law Amendment Bill was introduced into the parliament proposing various law and order reform initiatives including amendments to retrospectively apply the exceptions to the rules against double jeopardy, the introduction of a suite of new offences to address sports match fixing and the introduction of a new offence of serious animal cruelty. We did have a terrible case in the last few years in South-East Queensland in this area. This targets those persons who intentionally inflict severe pain or suffering upon an animal.

Other important initiatives our government has introduced include mandatory jail time for dangerous sex offenders who remove or tamper with their electronic monitoring bracelet. I believe that Queensland's sex offenders quite rightly and appropriately should be reviewed as part of this government's commitment to making this state the safest place to raise a child. The laws are being toughened to ensure victims have greater access to justice and that the legislation—and this is important—meets community standards and expectations. It also consolidates the work we have done in increasing penalties for offences against police, drug offences and the introduction of new offences such as grooming a child. Mr Chairman, we are delivering a brighter and safer future for everybody in this state—all Queenslanders—particularly of course focusing on families and our kids.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. The member for Inala has a question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: My question is to Mr Grayson. I refer to page 63 in relation to the Public Service Commission, and the bottom dot point says that the PSC will 'identify, replicate and promote best practice examples in workforce management within and outside the public sector'. Mr Grayson, can you please explain to the committee the confidentiality around the files of Public Service employees?

Mr Grayson: Of course confidentiality of private information is very important, and no more important than for public servants.

Ms PALASZCZUK: How is it maintained? Where are the files stored, for example?

Mr Grayson: There is a code of conduct and that governs the behaviour of public servants, and I believe that code of conduct would prevent any breaches of that confidentiality. There would be an obligation on senior management to ensure confidentiality of files.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Is there an obligation on yourself to investigate if you deem that there has been a breach of someone's confidential file?

Mr Grayson: If that related to an employee within my department, yes, it would.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Mr Grayson, and there have been media reports about an alleged breach of confidentiality. I notice the Premier held up an example from a report in the *Courier-Mail*, and I am now holding up an example of a report from the *Courier-Mail* about Dr Lynham, an employee of Queensland Health. Director-General, are you going to investigate?

CHAIR: Member for Inala, we have already talked about this.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have referred to the SDS. It is highly relevant. The director-general just said that there is a duty to investigate and I am asking whether the director-general is going to investigate. It is a very simple question.

CHAIR: We have already made a determination that you would go and seek the advice of the Clerk of the Parliament, so I rule that question out of order until you have actually sought that advice at the break. Next question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I talk a bit more about the confidentiality of files? Is that okay? Who would have access to public servants' confidential files?

Mr NEWMAN: I have a point of order, Mr Chair. My understanding of the practice here is that questions alternate under your control, and I have seen in the last two minutes probably about four different questions from the Leader of the Opposition. Can I just seek your guidance on how the Leader of the Opposition is asking the questions today?

CHAIR: Premier, we are doing a mix between questions and time. I will halt the member for Inala. It really has to relate to the estimates and to the examination of the budget papers.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, I am.

CHAIR: I think you are stretching the friendship here. Sure, if we are talking about what moneys are involved in security—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, I am. I wanted to get to the bottom of how the confidential files are held within the Public Service, who has access to those files. Chair, with all due respect, the Premier has been speaking about the past government at length—water, transport, payroll—and I want to examine this government and the actions of this government. I am asking the director-general about his Public Service, about how their files are managed, about how that confidentiality is kept. It is very relevant.

Mr NEWMAN: I rise to a point of order. I had a discussion with the Clerk of the Parliament, the independent statutory officer of this parliament, prior to coming in here today. I sought his advice on the specific meaning of the standing orders that apply to this parliament. This is not the federal parliament, which has different standing orders and different rules of procedure; this is the Queensland parliament. Again, I would like to propose, respectfully, that perhaps there is an adjournment so that the Leader of the Opposition can seek some advice from the Clerk. I have done so today, and I think that where the Leader of the Opposition is going is not covered by the standing orders because it does not relate to the expenditure in the budget. If the question were about that, I would be happy to answer it. If the Leader of the Opposition wants a political comment, seeing as she is interested in the issue, I am happy to—

Ms PALASZCZUK: You said you were leading the most open and transparent government.

Mr NEWMAN: I am not going to take that interjection lying down. I just say this. Every time parliament sits the Leader of the Opposition can ask me any question on any matter, but this is an estimates process. It follows proper rules and procedure that this parliament, with its 150 years of history—great history—has developed. That is the way that we are meant to conduct ourselves today.

Mr PITT: Can I please make a comment here? We are talking about the Service Delivery Statements of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, which has oversight of the Public Service Commission. The Public Service Commission is responsible for government employees policy, including personnel files. There could be nothing more relevant. The Public Service Commission is a part of the estimates process because there is expenditure provided for its operation in a fair, open and transparent way. There is nothing more relevant than a question that relates to the Public Service.

CHAIR: Sure, but when you are talking about a particular incident, we are actually getting into a hypothetical. We have no idea of how that—

Mr PITT: Mr Chair, with respect, there is nothing hypothetical about asking a direct question to the director-general of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet that relates to a specific matter and asking whether that will be investigated.

CHAIR: As far as that is concerned, if you have concerns I think you need to either refer them to the CCC or to the other bodies that would actually deal with them. I am happy if you want to go and get some information from the Clerk.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We can do that in the break. I will move on.

CHAIR: Are you happy to move on then?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, I am.

CHAIR: Okay, you can move on.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Premier, we will go back to the pensioners if we can, please, because I know a lot of pensioners were hurt by the cuts that the government initially made to their concessions. Can you please outline to this committee where the \$54 million is coming from to reinstate the pensioner concessions? Can you please point to the line item or the agency where the \$54 million is coming from?

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I just want to inquire, as I start to answer that question, there was a preliminary comment to the question which was about cuts or hurt to pensioners. Could we hear that again, please?

CHAIR: Can you repeat the question?

Ms PALASZCZUK: In the most recent budget there were cuts to pensioner concessions. Can the Premier now explain where the \$54.2 million is coming from for this black hole in his budget?

Mr NEWMAN: We are here to discuss the budget that has been introduced in the parliament.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes.

Mr NEWMAN: We are here to discuss the budget that is before the parliament. There are no cuts to pensioner concessions. The statement is false. The premise of the question is false. There are no cuts. I acknowledge that there was a document that was introduced to the parliament, but there are no cuts to what we are considering to date.

Ms PALASZCZUK: To clarify, the document that was introduced to the parliament said on page 3—my understanding is that it was the Concessions Statement—

Unfortunately, this will need to be passed on to pensioners and Seniors Card holders through reductions in the level of concessions that are available to them.

That was published. That was printed. Correct? So there were cuts?

Mr NEWMAN: Yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, correct. We have established that.

Mr NEWMAN: No, there have been no cuts to the concession. I want pensioners and seniors across this state to know today what I said before, which is that this government has worked hard in two ways. Firstly, we have worked hard to deal with the cost-of-living pressures resulting from a Labor government who did not control expenses properly that flowed through to higher taxes and charges; and, secondly, we have worked hard to make sure that they receive their full pensioner or Seniors Card concession in this budget. So that is where we are at today.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, I acknowledge that. My question is now about the reinstatement—

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman—

CHAIR: Excuse me. Someone else—

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, this is very important because what we see time and time again from the Leader of the Opposition and members of the Labor Party is that they will go out and continue to make assertions about cuts that are not true. Today we are here and under the rules of the parliament it is an offence to lie to the Queensland parliament. I assume that someone making a false assertion or a false statement today would be just as guilty of a criminal offence as I would be if I misled this committee or this parliament. I just make that point today. So let's not have assertions about cuts when there have not been any. We know that outside this room, outside these hallowed

halls, the Labor Party is very good at saying there have been cuts to Health. If only they said that in here, we would then see a thing or two because there have been no cuts by this government to the Health budget. The Health budget is 18.6 per cent higher, and I have talked about that.

To go to the question that the Leader of the Opposition appears to be attempting to ask, which is how has money been found to make up for the shortfall from the federal government, I say that is a really good question for the Treasurer and she should ask him that at his estimates hearing.

Mrs OSTAPOVITCH: I have a question for the Premier. I refer to page 12 of the DPC Service Delivery Statements, task forces and the criminal bikie laws. How has the introduction of laws to combat criminal motorcycle gangs helped the QPS improve the safety of all Queenslanders?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the member for her question. The member for Stretton is a very able representative of the people of the south side of Brisbane and into the northern part of the Logan area as well. I know that in various parts of South-East Queensland outside what I would call the leafy inner suburbs people understand perhaps more keenly than the rest of us the impact of criminal gangs and criminal gang activity on their communities.

This is a complex issue, but in some ways it is also straightforward. The activities of a gang who, for example, manufacture drugs, distribute drugs, engage in all sorts of associated criminal activity have wide-ranging implications in our society. To state perhaps some more obvious examples, if someone has a drug habit, they obviously have to feed that habit and they need to steal. That results in robberies, car theft, petty theft, shoplifting and the like. If we take a stand against criminal gangs, that actually has a positive, far-reaching effect. An analogy I could give is that it is like when someone throws a pebble into a pond. The pebble and its impact on the water is the direct impact of the gangs, but the ripples that spread across that pond are the way that the pervasive activities of criminal gangs reach across our community.

We are determined to make Queensland a safer place for families—absolutely determined. By going after criminal motorcycle gangs, we actually have very beneficial effects across the entire community. It heartens me today to see again what our esteemed Police Commissioner is saying. He has pointed out that, because we have given him and the service the tools to do the job and the extra men and women on the beat, we are seeing things that are not happening anywhere else in Australia to my knowledge. I have not heard of a 10 per cent reduction in crime in New South Wales or Victoria, for example. It is happening in Queensland. It is happening because of the leadership of our Police Commissioner and because, as I said, the government has given them the laws and the tools to do the job.

In terms of some of the specifics that are going on, the QPS Operation Resolute, which was aimed at disrupting and dismantling CMGs through Task Force Maxima and Task Force Takeback, achieved remarkable results. In the first nine months of Operation Resolute, weapons including handguns and rifles, motor vehicles, drug laboratories and cash in excess of \$1.7 million were seized by the police. There have been no traditional CMG gatherings occurring in public to our knowledge. The results of the operations as at 13 July include: 1,113 criminal motorcycle gang participants charged with 2,786 offences, 84 offenders facing prosecution under the new legislation for 124 offences including 40 on 66 charges where the criminal participant has been alleged to be a vicious lawless associate, 11 criminal motorcycle gang participants are being prosecuted on 23 charges under the Vicious Lawless Association Disestablishment Act 2014, the VLAD Act, and a further 29 persons have been arrested on 43 charges under the VLAD Act. However, they are participants of criminal organisations which are not CMGs. On 10 occasions criminal motorcycle participants have been located in groups of three or more in contravention of new legislation. There have been 33 applications referred to the former CMC, now the CCC, to consider the restraint of property under unexplained wealth legislation. I am happy to report that as at 16 June 2014, 26 of the 46 criminal motorcycle gang clubhouses had been vacated and the remaining were not being used—that is the information I have—and the public wearing of colours is uncommon. Displays of public violence by CMG participants have all but been eliminated, and isn't that heartening, particularly to people on the Gold Coast? Multiple police operations have been conducted, including national days of action against criminal motorcycle gangs specifically targeting chapters, clubs and criminal participants. Major criminal enterprises linked to and operated by criminal motorcycle gang participants have been uncovered.

In addressing the issue of criminal motorcycle gangs, partnerships have been enhanced—that has been one of the great positive developments—across federal and state agencies such as the other state police services, the Australian Crime Commission and the Australian Federal Police. That is going very well along with linkages with the Customs service and the Australian Taxation Office who are now working from QPS headquarters in Roma Street as the National Anti-Gang Squad.

In terms of those overall impacts I mentioned—the ripples spreading across the pond—from 1 July 2013 to 31 May 2014 compared with the period from 1 July 2012 to 31 May 2013 there have been some marvellous reductions in crime which I will be happy to talk about more later on. There have been some increases in offences. I think one that has increased, for example, is extortion. But let's just stop and think for a moment. What does that mean? It means that people have confidence to come forward; they have confidence that the police will act, that they will be protected. So we are seeing that people now have the courage to come forward. I urge Queenslanders to actually come forward if they see the influence or the activities of criminal gangs, motorcycle or otherwise, so that we can take action. In conclusion, if we all work together, if we all come together, we will make this the safest place in Australia to raise a family. I think that is something we can all work together to make a reality.

Dr FLEGG: I refer to page 5 of the DPC SDS, agency core business. Can the Premier tell the committee how your department's efforts to improve service delivery across agencies have had a positive effect on public transport services, particularly by rail?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the member for Moggill for his question. I just say that public transport improvements are all part of our strong plan for a bright future for Queensland. We want to rebuild the public's trust in the public transport system. We want the best and most affordable public transport in Australia. I know that a particular area of weakness has been the rail network. In particular, the previous government eroded the trust in that public transport system—again, I am referring mainly to the rail network—by increasing costs and lowering service standards.

This government is reversing the trend with more trains, better bus services, and really putting a lid on costs. Effectively for the regular commuter or person who is taking nine journeys or more a week—and of course a regular commuter, for example, in the Brisbane CBD is such a person—we are essentially capping the cost to them. We are seeing the results of these efforts already with more rail passengers getting to their destinations on time. Last quarter we saw 95.8 per cent on-time running performance for rail services across South-East Queensland. That has improved from a three-year low of 86 per cent under the previous government to a 10-year high under this government.

The Leader of the Opposition is sitting there. Any time that the Leader of the Opposition wants to acknowledge this achievement that would be appreciated, because it is a great achievement. We are working far harder on this important issue and turning that around. There have been many maintenance issues that have had to be sorted out, and there has had to be a real culture change to actually improve that on-time performance. Today I congratulate everybody involved in the team: of course the hardworking men and women on the ground who work in QR's passenger services and also the management team at QR. Neil Scales as the Director-General and Minister Scott Emerson have all worked together tremendously to achieve these results.

Moving on, we have seen 1,000 more rail services each week; we introduced free travel after nine journeys in a week; and there has been a 12-month trial of cheaper off-peak travel. We have moved the 20 per cent off-peak discount from 9 am to start at 8.30 am, a bit earlier, again giving back some more to people. That is quite a concession. We have provided cheaper public transport, resulting in over \$732,000 in real savings to peak hour customers. We have halved Labor's planned 15 per cent fare increases for 2012-13 and 2013-14, and the desire is to limit subsequent fare increases to CPI.

I am a bit nonplussed about this, but the information I have is that the Labor Party have announced that they will scrap free travel after nine trips. If I have that wrong, I will stand corrected. But if that is the case, that would automatically make travel more expensive. When I think of my own constituents in the Ashgrove electorate, for example, someone travelling from the Brisbane CBD to The Gap, I know that for a typical commuter, a regular commuter, that would have to result in an immediate increase in their cost of living in excess of \$200. It actually might be higher than that—I stress that I am giving an estimate—so I would think that would be a retrograde step.

I just finally conclude by saying that this public transport renewal and revitalisation demonstrates again the government's strong plan for a bright future for Queensland and everyone in this state.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. The member for Gladstone had a number of questions.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Yes. Thank you, Mr Chair. Premier, you have already said that it is important to speak the truth in this room, and I am very concerned not to misunderstand the circumstances of the pensioner discounts. It was my understanding that the federal government failed

to fund significant pensioner discounts, and initially this failure to fund was acknowledged by the state government by, I believe, the Treasurer in his statement to the House during the budget process. Subsequent to the delivery of the budget the Premier—you—announced that the state was going to cover that shortfall, and it is a significant amount of money.

If those facts are true, given the tight fiscal position that is regularly referred to and understood by people in the state, the community supports the government's decision, but I believe they would be interested in understanding where that funding is going to be drawn from and how it is going to be funded for this financial year.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I thank the member for Gladstone for her question. Once again I think it demonstrates—and I have said this before—the member's caring and compassion, not only for her community, but for people across this state. I thank her for that, and I would just assure her that the decision the government made was exactly because we share that same concern for seniors and pensioners.

I will come to the answer, but I will just mention some figures in a bit more detail which I did not talk about earlier in relation to the concessions. Again I stress that we are totally committed to helping vulnerable Queenslanders with cost of living issues, but we are also committed to helping all Queenslanders with cost of living issues. That is why we made strong decisions, particularly in the first budget—the budget we handed down in 2012—which we are now getting benefits from. The benefits we are getting from dealing with Labor's poor and reckless financial management mean that we actually have the ability to absorb hits, shocks and unexpected things when they occur. I will come back to that.

What actually happened? Well, the federal government's budget reduced funding to Queensland for concessions by \$54.2 million in 2014-15. That is \$233.2 million over four years. I do not want to go over old ground, but I do again reflect that I made it very clear at the time that I was not happy with that, and so did the Treasurer. We quite strongly represented our views to the federal government. I personally made representations to the Prime Minister, both in writing and directly to his face, because I care about those Queenslanders. The concessions which would have been affected were: the electricity rebate, the natural gas rebate, the pensioner rate subsidy, the South-East Queensland water subsidy, the vehicle registration concessions, and the transport concessions.

The decision to reduce funding again was a federal decision, and we stepped in and did the right thing. I would point out that in 2014-15 we will spend overall \$348 million on concessions to pensioners and seniors, so the \$54.2 million was part of that overall expenditure. A further context which people do not know about perhaps is that there are about \$5.1 billion worth of concessions to assist Queenslanders in the budget; for example, the CSO to protect people in regional Queensland on electricity prices. So that is the context to this whole issue.

My answer to the question specifically is that because we made those strong decisions and because we worked hard in both 2012 and 2013, there is the ability to absorb these sorts of shocks or hits, unexpected and unwanted as they may be. As I said earlier on, I think the question should be answered by the Treasurer.

CHAIR: Thank you. Member for Gladstone, have you a further question?

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Yes. On budget paper page 6, you talk about developing 'options for reform of federal/state relations, that align with the Queensland Government's key objectives ...'. Over the last few months there have been quite a number of conflicts in relation to the direction of the federal government and the stated pillars for the state government to build the state. How do you see those reforms developing?

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, the member for Gladstone is sort of almost provoking me in a nice way, because there is nothing I like to speak about more than the reform of our Federation. She is right to point to some issues where I have stood up for Queensland with the federal government, even though they are of the same political persuasion. I would make the point to those here today—and indeed Queenslanders who are watching via the internet—that I will always stand up for Queensland. That is my job. I will always put Queenslanders before political parties. Queenslanders come first; they always will. I make that commitment again today publicly.

Our Federation was formed over 100 years ago, and the Premiers of the former colonies came together and engaged in quite lengthy political negotiation to achieve a Constitution for our nation. That Constitution is there and over the years there have been amendments, but essentially it is the

Constitution that was developed. However, as we would all know, there have been many decisions in the High Court that have changed the way that our Constitution is viewed and interpreted. In fact, there was one decision only a few weeks ago which has some interesting implications for the way that the federal government funds programs, and of course I am referring to the chaplaincy case.

While I am on that subject I would just say that we are more than happy to fund chaplains, and if the federal government want to sit down and work with us to come up with an arrangement, we will see that fine program continue.

The point I am making is that over the last 100 years there have been changes to the Constitution through court decisions, essentially, which affect the way that the Commonwealth and the states interact. We have seen, sadly, far more centralisation in this nation. We have seen Canberra trying to implement policies—and sometimes they have been good policies; sometimes they have not been such good policies—using the power of the dollar. What I am calling for is a process with an outcome which reforms our Federation. I am not talking about constitutional change. I am talking about a compact, an accord, between the Commonwealth and the states which says: this is where we are in the year 2014 and this is how we should run the nation to end waste, bureaucracy and duplication, stop the overlap and give the men and women of this state—and indeed other states—more confidence in the operations of government so that they clearly know, for example, who is responsible for things. You hear the Prime Minister say that the states are sovereign, responsible for health and education. That constitutionally is the case, but there are a lot of public servants in Canberra who are also running programs in health and education that impact on the states as well.

So what is the potential? I do not have the figures or the studies with me today, and I just stress, Mr Chairman, that this is only for the benefit of the committee and in response to the honourable member, but I understand there are some university research studies that estimate that the savings that would be available nationally by reforming the Federation, if I recall correctly, could be in the order of \$20 billion to \$80 billion or \$85 billion per annum. If you think about the various state budgets, we are roughly \$48 billion, the Commonwealth is roughly \$400 billion, and there are all the other states. I know \$20 billion to \$85 billion sounds like a lot of money, but in the scheme of things with all of those budgets combined think what this state could do if we, with one fifth of the nation's population, having been through a reform process, could get access to one fifth of \$20 billion. That is \$4 billion in one financial year. I am only aware of these studies; as I said, I do not have them here. But think of the opportunity. That is why I am passionate about this, Mr Chairman.

I do not want to have ongoing disagreements with the Commonwealth Government. I want to see real reform. I want to see a compact between the Commonwealth and the states which will unlock such savings and help our financial viability. I am the 38th Premier of this great state, but I believe that all of the Premiers prior to me since Federation would have liked to see greater control over the sources of revenue required to fund the vital services and infrastructure that Queenslanders expect.

I hope that is of some use to the member. I would be delighted to answer a more detailed follow-up question if she has one.

CHAIR: We only have about a minute and a half to go, so if it is a quick question and then a quick answer that would be fine.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Probably not. You refer on page 6 to managing the growth of LNG. Gladstone is one of the major proponents or contributors to the LNG program in Queensland, and yet we have been spectacularly unsuccessful in getting infrastructure funding, whether it is Royalties for the Regions or any other infrastructure, not only from this government, but the previous government in terms of conditioning. How can confidence be rebuilt in the community in relation to LNG without appropriate infrastructure?

Mr NEWMAN: Given that I am under the pump here—

CHAIR: Premier, we might call it now and you can answer the question—

Mr NEWMAN: I can give a quick answer; I just won't be giving yes or no answers.

CHAIR: Premier, you have a minute.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I am sorry the member feels that way, because I would just point very quickly to two things: the Bruce Highway and I think it is called the Kin Kora roundabout. When I was the Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member took me for a little drive around her patch and pointed particularly to that one, and I am delivering on that with federal colleagues. That is a very

important intersection in Gladstone with great congestion. The member for Gladstone said that it is a problem, and I have worked with the federal member and the minister for transport to deliver an upgrade of that one.

The other one, of course, is the Bruce Highway. I think over \$700 million has been provided for in this financial year for the Bruce Highway as part of our \$10 billion 10-year plan to upgrade the Bruce Highway, and I point to roadworks particularly in the vicinity of Gympie that will make that a safer road. I personally agreed with the former federal minister Anthony Albanese, and that is happening because we came to the agreement to get that work done, which was not forecast. So there you go: that will all benefit Gladstone residents.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. The committee will now take a break and resume at 10.45.

Proceedings suspended from 10.16 am to 10.45 am



CHAIR: The committee will now resume its examination of the portfolio of the Premier, including the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Public Service Commission. I call on the member for Murrumba.

Mr GULLEY: My question is to the Premier. I refer to page 8 of the DPC Service Delivery Statements with regard to the youth boot camp trial. Premier, you briefly touched on that in prior answers to questions. Can you provide further feedback with regard to the rollout of the youth boot camps across the state?

Mr NEWMAN: Again I acknowledge the honourable member's great interest in these issues. When I note that, I particularly point out that the member is a very caring and compassionate person who approaches this actually from the standpoint that he has a very strong commitment to young people in his electorate.

We do not want young people in jail. We do not want them involved in criminal activity. We do not want them in jail; we want them to be given the support to lead productive lives that contribute to our community. Ultimately, that is what the government's approach is all about. The specific initiative fits into that. It is about trying to provide an outlet away from the way we have been trying to do this for many, many years which, arguably, has not been totally successful.

The government has committed \$5.1 million for the boot camp initiative. I have visited the one at the back of the Gold Coast. In fact, it is in the Scenic Rim council area. I was very impressed with what I saw—not only with the passion and enthusiasm of the leaders and instructors but also with the young people on that camp. We are seeing good results. I am really pleased to reflect on this initiative, because it is something we promised in the lead-up to the last election.

As at 30 June, 121 young people had commenced in boot camps across the state. Twenty-eight young people had been accepted at the sentenced youth boot camp. Twenty-six had commenced as at 30 June and two will commence in July. Twenty-six young people have commenced at the Rockhampton early intervention youth boot camp, 32 young people have commenced at the Hervey Bay early intervention youth boot camp and 35 young people have commenced at the Gold Coast early intervention youth boot camp—the one I referred to earlier.

While it is too early to determine the long-term effectiveness of the early intervention boot camp program, they are currently showing, I am told, a 91 per cent success rate in stopping participants from actually entering the youth justice system. That is pretty significant. All of the early intervention youth boot camp providers are reporting positive outcomes for young participants including improvements in attitude, motivation, behaviours, attendance, respect and communication displayed by young people both at school and at home with their families. Just to stop for a moment, I recall from when I visited some of the stories told directly by parents about being at their wits' end in trying to deal with a troubled young adult. There was almost fear in those relationships from the adult because of the behaviours they were seeing. Importantly, approximately 90 per cent of the young people completing the program are also re-engaging in either school or employment. Early indications suggest that young people who present showing high levels of emotional and behaviour indicators have benefited most from the boot camp intervention, with there being an improvement in overall resilience amongst participants.

While it is still early days in the trial to determine effectiveness, as at 30 June 2014 the sentenced youth boot camp is showing an 83 per cent success rate in stopping reoffending. I am cautiously excited about these results. In Rockhampton, 25 young people have taken part, with a

100 per cent non-reoffending rate. On the Fraser/Sunshine Coast camp, 31 young people have taken part with a 90 per cent non-reoffending rate. The Gold Coast has seen 35 young people take part, with a 90 per cent non-reoffending rate.

These boot camps are giving our young people who have come in contact with the youth justice system and those at risk the opportunity for a brighter future. It is very clear to me: by undergoing the boot camp these young people are coming out with a future instead of a bleak revolving door of criminal life that so many were facing under the previous government's failed youth justice system.

The community is also a safer place, with less crime and less heartache confronting Queenslanders. If there is a single location in Queensland that comes to the top of my mind that is benefiting from this initiative, it is the city of Townsville. There have been many media reports about the drop in criminal activity, particularly property crime, housebreaking and car theft, in Townsville. So we are pressing on.

We are currently developing the blueprint for the future of youth justice which will be a five-year plan to reform the youth justice system. This will focus on four key areas: intervene early, prevent a life of crime, hold young offenders accountable and change entrenched criminal behaviour. This will be the culmination of the reforms underway in youth justice, such as the tough new laws and the two-year trial of youth boot camps. I thank the honourable member for his interest and his passion in this area.

Mr STEWART: Premier, you touched on this in your opening statement and also in answer to the last question I asked. I would like to ask you a question in relation to page 8 of the SDS and drink-safe precincts. Can you please outline the changes the government is making under the new Safe Night Out Strategy?

Mr NEWMAN: This great state of Queensland is a terrific place to enjoy a fantastic night out. Overwhelmingly, Queenslanders and visitors to our great state do enjoy our night-life safely and without incident. At the end of the day, people do the right thing and they are grown-ups. The government, though, is committed to protecting all Queenslanders and that opportunity for a vibrant night-life.

Unfortunately, alcohol and drug fuelled violence is not a new phenomenon in Queensland or other parts of the nation. Indeed, there is a long history in relation to alcohol regulation which on other occasions I have commented on. I reflect particularly, of course, on the temperance movement in the 1890s in this very city and state. So this is an issue that has challenged governments and policymakers for well over 100 years. We should not lose sight of that.

That context is important because in previous years responses which led to significant curtailment of drinking hours occurred. That was the policy response. That probably culminated around the 1950s or 1960s and since that time we have seen progressive deregulation. Why? Because if you actually look at the history you will see that those measures did not prove to be successful. The history would show that. Nevertheless, we have an issue now and we are determined to deal with that issue in our state of Queensland.

We have seen the devastating and often tragic effects of the so-called coward punch. The government has recognised that fresh measures are needed to counter the dangerous trend of innocent people falling victim to this senseless violence at the hands of people who are drunk or high on illicit drugs or a combination thereof. Queenslanders, through some very extensive community consultation, have told us that something had to be done about this—about the violence but I think importantly about the culture that is around this. So our response is the Safe Night Out Strategy. It is a comprehensive action plan, funded in the budget, to tackle alcohol and drug fuelled violence in Queensland.

The strategy announced last month, on 6 June, aims to firstly stamp out alcohol and drug related violence, restore responsible behaviour and ensure Queensland's night-life is safe for all. I stress: this is a comprehensive strategy. It is not a bandaid; it is a comprehensive response—a comprehensive approach to change the culture that leads to antisocial and violent behaviour.

What does the strategy include? It includes quite a few things. I do need to go through this in detail, Mr Chairman, because it is a very significant expenditure of public funds. The first is education for young people on the dangers of misuse of alcohol and use of illicit drugs. Particularly—this is not well understood—the government will not be preaching; the government will be pointing out that

antisocial and violent behaviour that comes from overconsumption is the issue that we want to see dealt with. So there is a strong theme of responsible consumption of alcohol and saying no, of course, to illicit drugs.

The second is tougher penalties, with severe consequences for violent or antisocial behaviour in and around licensed venues. I stress: we are not just talking about violence here; we are also talking about antisocial behaviour. If we make a very clear statement to the community—it is really one that has come from the community—about what expectations and standards are, then I think we will see some very positive change.

Thirdly, of course there will be enhanced compliance with liquor licensing conditions and better local management of issues through the safe night out precincts. Quite a large number of these will be set up across the state. And then there is the initiative of networked ID scanners. So if you misbehave and are banned in Gladstone then you will not get into a venue in Rockhampton. I know that would reassure the members for Gladstone, Keppel and Rockhampton to know that that would happen. And of course that would apply across the state. Some initiatives are currently being implemented and most will be implemented by the end of 2014—all overseen by an implementation panel.

Changes contained in the Safe Night Out Legislation Amendment Bill now before the House include significant criminal law reforms. The bill creates a new offence of unlawful striking causing death to directly target cowardly acts of violence. This offence will be punishable by the maximum penalty of life imprisonment. Challenging and at times dangerous duties performed by Queensland's front-line service providers such as ambulance officers, nurses, hospital staff and of course police officers is expressly acknowledged with tougher penalties for serious attacks on these officers. Earlier this year I had a lengthy conversation with ambulance officers at the Ashgrove station about these issues. That was significant because on many occasions they are called to assist the inner-city station and they will be on relief when things are busy. So they know only too well what happens and they specifically said, 'Premier, can you please provide support to us in this sort of way?'

The bill also provides for mandatory drug and alcohol assessments for intoxicated offenders who commit offences of violence. Offenders charged with a prescribed offence of violence committed in public when intoxicated will face a new mandatory bail condition that a person will be required to attend drug and alcohol assessment and referral sessions. The bill ensures that the court cannot lessen a sentence because of the voluntary intoxication of an offender. People need to take responsibility for their actions. Mandatory community service orders for particular offenders who commit a violent offence in public when intoxicated will be imposed and the courts will be empowered to impose longer bans from licensed premises, including lifetime bans where necessary.

Penalties for offences involving steroids will be strengthened to make sure they are consistent with heavy penalties applying to other dangerous drugs such as methamphetamine and ecstasy. The bill also makes important amendments to the state's liquor licensing framework. Licensees will be required to provide a safe environment for patrons and community members in and around licensed premises. The meaning of 'unduly intoxicated' will be amended to close an existing loophole and ensure that licensees can be prosecuted for serving an unduly intoxicated person regardless of whether that person is affected by alcohol or drugs.

The Safe Night Out Strategy also establishes a framework for the creation of safe night precincts which, following consultation with the local communities involved, will be established in key entertainment precincts across the state. The licensees in safe night precincts will be required to join an incorporated association, which will be the local board for the precinct. Eligible members of the boards will also include local businesses, members of chambers of commerce and representatives of local community organisations. The association's goals will reflect a commitment to preserving safety and amenity in the precinct. As a not-for-profit association, the local board will be eligible to raise funds in pursuit of its goals. Queensland government agencies, including police, transport and ambulance services, will work closely with the boards.

Local communities will be empowered through the local boards to ensure that key entertainment precincts across Queensland are managed in the most effective way possible to safely deal with high volumes of patrons at peak times. Decisions about managing the 15 respective safe night precincts will be in the hands of the local community. A significant part of the management of the safe night precincts is the use of these networked ID scanners to manage violent or disorderly patrons. Liquor licensed venues approved to trade past midnight in a safe night precinct will be required to operate an ID scanner that is networked to a broader ID scanner system from 8 pm until

close of trade each day. Although there are many benefits to the use of ID scanners, there will be important safeguards to ensure personal information is adequately protected. I assure the committee, Mr Chairman, that this has been at the forefront of my mind since the whole concept began to be explored.

Police will have the powers to ensure that the unacceptable behaviour of a few does not ruin the enjoyment of the many—the majority of law-abiding Queenslanders, particularly young Queenslanders—in having this great night-life in this state. Police will have a new power to ban a violent or disorderly person from a licensed premises, safe night precinct or public events where liquor is being sold. A police banning notice can be for the duration of an event or for an initial period of 10 days. Appropriate review processes are included for both banning notices—and, again, this was something that I saw as being critically important.

The Safe Night Out Strategy also provides for the trial of a sober safe centre in Brisbane. If a person is intoxicated and behaving in a way that could result in harm to themselves or another person, or is causing a public nuisance, police will be able to take them to the sober safe centre for up to eight hours. The person will not be charged with an offence; rather, they will be detained for their own safety under the supervision of a relevant healthcare professional. The person will be released once they are no longer intoxicated and a danger to themselves or other persons.

To summarise, this government is committed to the preservation of our diverse and vibrant night-life. The vast majority of Queenslanders do the right thing when they go out, and this government wants people to be safe and to enjoy themselves. That is what we are about. The Safe Night Out Strategy is all about protecting Queenslanders and all that is great in our wonderful night-life. A safe night out is a great night out, and this can only be achieved by our can-do government with a strong plan for a brighter future for Queensland.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. I call the member for Inala.

Ms PALASZCZUK: My question is to the director-general. Director-General, I refer to page 2 of the SDS, 'supporting and advising the Premier and Cabinet, Ministers and agencies to ensure the structures and processes of government run efficiently'; page 10, \$125 million in appropriation and other revenue; and page 26, \$50.445 million for employee expenses for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Director-General, in administering these employee expenses, does the Department of the Premier and Cabinet have a code of conduct?

Mr Grayson: Yes, we do. In fact, the whole Public Service has a code of conduct. Mr Chairman, that code of conduct has been in place for some time. It was in place I think in January 2011. No changes have been made to that code of conduct, and we adhere to it. I expect that employees in my department will adhere to it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Director-General. Does this code of conduct outline public servant obligations to disclose knowledge of alleged corrupt conduct?

Mr Grayson: I am not sure to be honest whether the code of conduct explicitly says that. However, there is legislation in place of course that covers that—the recently amended Crime and Corruption Commission legislation, for example.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Are you familiar with sections 38 and 39 of the Crime and Corruption Commission Act?

Mr Grayson: Mr Chairman, if I could have those provisions—

CHAIR: Can you seek leave to table that document?

Mr PITT: You do not need to seek leave.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I table that.

CHAIR: You need to seek leave.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I seek leave to table the sections.

CHAIR: There being no objection, leave is granted.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Director-General, if there is—

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I raise a point of order. The honourable member has raised a question and tabled a document. I just seek your indulgence in giving him—

CHAIR: An opportunity to read it, yes.

Mr NEWMAN:—more than five microseconds to actually read the document that has been tabled. I think that would be just good manners.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. I do take that on board. Have you got another question?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will wait.

CHAIR: Are we happy to have dead air for a little while? Okay.

Mr Grayson: Yes, Mr Chairman. The provision that the honourable member is referring to—was that section 38?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sections 38 and 39.

Mr Grayson: It is similar to the provision that existed under the old CMC Act. The threshold of course has changed but it does place a positive obligation on officials to report, in this case now, corrupt conduct.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Director-General, if there is a suspicion that there has been a breach of an employee's personal confidential file, do you now confirm that there is an obligation for you to actually investigate that matter under the code of conduct or under the Crime and Corruption Commission Act?

Mr NEWMAN: Point of order, Mr Chairman—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am asking the director-general. It is very clear.

Mr NEWMAN: I raise a point of order, Mr Chairman. Standing order 115 in relation to questions states questions shall not contain hypothetical matters. Can we understand what the question is?

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. I was going to raise that—

Mr NEWMAN: My apologies, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR:—because, again, this is bordering on hypotheticals here.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No. There is an alleged breach.

CHAIR: Well, there has been no complaint made officially from my understanding. So we are bordering on the hypothetical here.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I seek leave to table a document.

CHAIR: The document is?

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is a complaint. I table the complaint.

CHAIR: I think the committee needs to review that letter.

Mr NEWMAN: I raise a point of order, Mr Chairman. We have an independent, crime-fighting, corruption-busting body—it is called the CCC. Rather than coming in here either—

Ms PALASZCZUK: No. There is an obligation on the director-general to investigate. He has clearly established that in the answering of the questions.

CHAIR: I ask you to cease interjecting. The Premier was actually making a point of order. Allow him to make that point of order and then I am more than happy for you to have the opportunity. I call the Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, again, let me just go back to what I said a couple of hours ago. As I understand it, and as I have been advised by the Clerk of the Parliament, this is a forum for examining what the government proposes to spend in relation to Queenslanders' hard-earned money. If the honourable member has a complaint or an allegation, there are a number of ways that that can be aired and aired appropriately and sensibly.

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr NEWMAN: I again fail to see that, while it may be important to the honourable member or to other people—I am certainly accepting of that, but this is not the forum or the way to do it.

CHAIR: I think I would have to agree with you, Premier. As I said, we are dealing with hypotheticals. If you have a complaint, go through the appropriate channels and lodge that complaint. But I do not think this is the forum to do it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I just make one point of order? My understanding is that the director-general has an obligation to investigate. Can I move on to my next question?

Mr NEWMAN: Point of order, Mr Chairman, again—

Ms PALASZCZUK: We are talking about employees' personal files.

CHAIR: I have asked you not to interject, and you have interjected again. The Premier was making a point of order. So allow him to make that point of order and again you can respond.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, it is my understanding during the break that this issue has been extensively canvassed in the health committee. Frankly, if the honourable member wants to go further with this, I suggest further questions and points in relation to the matter be dealt with through the health committee, where the relevant director-general and the health minister are present and who I am sure would give their responses to the matters raised, and indeed have this morning.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. I deem that question out of order in the sense that it is a hypothetical.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I ask one question to the director-general?

CHAIR: No. I think it is now—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am moving on to the next question.

CHAIR: Okay.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Director-General, the Premier was talking about boot camps before in answer to a government question. I refer the director-general to revelations in May that there were question marks over the decision by the Attorney-General to intervene in the appointment of a lucrative \$2 million government tender for a boot camp near Townsville. The successful tenderer was awarded the contract despite not being short-listed by the assessment panel and despite being twice as expensive as the recommended applicant. Has the director-general made any moves to investigate these claims?

Mr Grayson: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Mr NEWMAN: I raise a point of order, Mr Chairman. Where does this relate to the SDS?

Ms PALASZCZUK: You answered questions about the boot camps before.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, where does this relate though to the actual estimates—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Page 5, DPC is responsible for 'managing the business of government'. Director-General, it is a very legitimate question.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I would suggest—

Ms PALASZCZUK: You don't want the truth to come out.

CHAIR: Excuse me, member for Inala.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I am taking my privilege to actually decide where this question goes, and I would suggest that it can be referred to the Attorney-General, who is responsible for this program, in the other committee meeting.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I raise a point of order, Mr Chairman. I am allowed to ask the director-general questions. I am allowed to direct my questions to the director-general. It is my right. It is my right in this committee to question the director-general.

CHAIR: The Premier is answering for him.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, but it is my right to ask the director-general. I will come to the Premier later on.

Dr FLEGG: In his portfolio, not anything.

CHAIR: Mr Grayson, you can answer the question or not. It is your privilege to do that.

Mr Grayson: Mr Chairman, thank you very much. I think it is very difficult to answer that question without knowing the nature of it or if there are any inferences or allegations in the question. I believe it is a matter that was canvassed in the House.

CHAIR: Yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: And reported publicly in the media.

Mr Grayson: So I believe there has been an answer provided in the House to this question, but it would most appropriately be referred, if in the case of a director-general, to the Director-General of Justice and Attorney-General.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Grayson. Member for Stretton?

Mrs OSTAPOVITCH: This is another question for the Premier. I refer to page 7 of the DPC SDS about the G20 summit. Could you please tell us how has the Queensland Police Service benefited from the preparations for the G20, particularly in regard to mobile devices for front-line officers?

Mr NEWMAN: Queensland is ready and willing to hold this year's G20 world leaders summit here in Brisbane and the finance ministers meeting in Cairns. I have said it before but I say it again today that hosting the G20 Leaders Summit will provide worldwide exposure to Queensland and a significant boost to our economy. Some 4,000 delegates and over 3,000 members of the international and domestic media will be visiting our state.

The summit will provide a direct investment in Queensland through the use of hotels, engagement of local service providers and providing jobs in the lead-up and planning of the summit. It will also see our Police Service—the Queensland Police Service—in their proud 150th year utilising the latest in mobile policing technology. Since July 2013 the Queensland Police Service began trialling mobile devices and apps. I might stop there and reflect that these sorts of technological advancements had occurred prior to the elevation of this government in 2012. One would be forgiven if one was a serving officer in the QPS to wonder why the former government did not care enough to deploy to the field important information technology. I hope the men and women in the blue uniforms who serve us now see where they are getting support—it is from this LNP, can-do government that is determined to do everything we can to make this a safer state for all Queenslanders.

Since July last year they have been trialling this technology. Initially, it was 50 devices. It has grown to a further 400 devices, all aimed at giving information to front-line officers, bringing it literally to their fingertips. What are the advantages? It gets police out from behind desks and right out into the communities. We do not want police bogged down with paperwork. Every minute that is saved in terms of being in the office is a minute that they are out on patrol fighting crime, protecting Queenslanders. We are rolling out an additional 1,250 devices for the G20. The recently redesigned police operations centre will also provide enhanced situational awareness for the G20, and it has some of the most advanced technology available to police in the country.

Last year we passed the G20 (Safety and Security) Act 2013. For the period of the G20 it gives police increased powers to protect the safety and security of Queenslanders, world leaders and international visitors and to protect the dignity of the G20 meetings. This infrastructure that I have spoken about protects our community. I cannot stress that enough. Not only are we revitalising front-line services; we are giving the police who serve us the equipment and the support they need to ensure a bright and safe future for all Queenslanders.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. I call on the member for Moggill.

Dr FLEGG: Premier, I refer to page 6 of the DPC SDS under 'skills and training reform'. Could the Premier please provide an update to the committee of the reforms the government has undertaken to revitalise the skills and training sector?

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, this government understands what it has to do. It understands that we have to make this the best-performing economy of any state in the nation. To have the best-performing state economy, you need a number of ingredients. I referred earlier to creating an environment where business can flourish, but we also need skilled, well-trained employees. We want to give the opportunity for all our young people to get great jobs.

I cannot stress enough today my passion for education in skills training. This is something that is so important to me and the government. JP Langbroek, our very hardworking Minister for Education, has been spearheading many important reforms that the honourable member has referred to over the last two years to make training and education relevant to the needs of employers so our young people can get great jobs. That is what it is about. We should not be training for training's sake. We should be training for the jobs that are the jobs of the future but are jobs that will be delivered by the private sector. We understand that. We want stable, satisfying, well-paid jobs in our four-pillar economy.

If we look at what has happened in recent times, on 8 June last year Great skills. Real opportunities was released. This is the government's reform action plan. The rollout of that is being funded in this budget which we are discussing today. The plan is about ensuring quality training is linked, as I said, to employment, improving consumer choice. That is a very important thing. People should have choice. Gone are the days where one size fits all and the only way to get a particular

career pathway is to go to a certain training institution. Surely consumers should have choice and of course—and I alluded to this—improved engagement with industry and employers. We have to join the needs of industry—those employers with the institutions—so the young people coming through get that training.

A big part of this is the transformation of TAFE Queensland to be competitive, responsive, innovative and flexible in service delivery. From 1 July 2014 all state government subsidised training will be delivered contestably. The 2014-15 VET Investment Plan outlines investment of \$615 million to address skills shortages and boost productivity. It draws on advice from the independent Ministerial Industry Commission which recommended that the government focus investment in courses that lead to a job. This is what I have been saying—\$47 million over five years and \$10 million in 2014-15 to support disadvantaged learners gain qualifications through the contestably provided Community Learning initiative.

Under the VET Investment Plan there are a number of offerings targeted specifically at young people including fee-free training for grade 12 students in priority areas through the certificate III guarantee, user choice funding for apprenticeships and traineeships, VETiS and school based apprenticeships and traineeships and SATs for school students. VETiS qualifications will be subsidised at the certificate 1 or 2 level where they are from the employment stream, unless there is a clear business case for a certificate III qualification to be funded outside the SAT pathway, and the Community Learning program will see community based providers providing certificate 1, 2 and 3 level courses in a less formal community setting.

Lastly, in recognition of the higher cost base that TAFE Queensland faces compared to some other providers, the Queensland government will provide it with a \$134 million purchases grant in the 2014-15 financial year as part of the VET Investment Plan. On 18 May 2014 TAFE Queensland launched a new brand, an advertising campaign. You have probably seen it, Mr Chairman. It runs from 18 May, I believe, to 27 July and it celebrates the doers in life—the people who make the world turn. The rebranding forms part of this government's overall efforts to revitalise TAFE and make it into a strong, independent, commercially focused provider of quality training that leads to jobs—again, part of a strong plan for a bright future for Queensland and the people of this state.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. Member for Inala?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I refer to page 7 of the SDS: 'lead delivery of whole-of-government communication and sponsorship' and, in particular, the Strong Choices advertising campaign. How much in taxpayer funding has the government allocated to date in total to the Strong Choices campaign?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the honourable member for the question. I will just get hold of some of the figures on that. While we are pulling that together, I think it is necessary that I talk about the campaign that has been running. We have made strong decisions in the past two years, and we have worked over time every single day to get the finances of this state sorted out. It has been challenging and we have reflected on some of those decisions earlier in this hearing.

The effect of these strong and important decisions is that after the years of poor and reckless financial management we now have responsible grown-up management of the state's finances, which means that not in this financial year that we are talking about today but in the 2015-16 financial year, which is obviously in the forwards, happily we go into a fiscal surplus position. My understanding is that it is the first fiscal surplus the state has seen in a decade. If I am wrong, I will stand corrected but that is my understanding. That means that for the first time in a decade we will not have to borrow. The trouble is that we will have a debt of \$80 billion. I am disappointed to reflect today that the member for Mulgrave on many occasions publicly but not within the parliament—where, of course, he would be in a lot of trouble with the accountability measure that we introduced making it an offence to lie to parliament. He would be in a lot of trouble if he said some of those things in the parliament in relation to debt that he said outside. What we have done is pulled the debt up at \$80 billion. That is where it peaks. The last Labor budget and budget documents in 2011 demonstrate Andrew Fraser, a former cabinet colleague of the member for Mulgrave, expected the debt would peak at \$85 billion. What I am saying is that we reach a point in the next year or so where we have balanced the books, but we still have \$80 billion worth of debt that the Labor Party bequeathed to the people of Queensland. That is very significant. That is an average debt per Queenslander of \$16,209—higher than any other state in the Commonwealth of Australia, and it will grow and continue to grow if we do not do something about it.

Currently, interest payments cost us \$450,000 of interest an hour on that Labor accumulated debt—I repeat: \$450,000 an hour. Think what you could get with \$450,000 every hour. I would like to be treating patients, Mr Chairman. I would like to be providing social housing for disadvantaged Queenslanders. I would like to be doing an even better job than we already have in getting great schools delivered and empowering teachers and school communities—

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is all well and good, Premier, but I am after the taxpayers' money on the campaign. It is a specific question.

CHAIR: The Premier was answering the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, he is not. It is a specific question.

CHAIR: Let the Premier answer the question. I do not want you to interject.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, there is important context here. We all know it. The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Mulgrave constantly deny the poor and reckless financial management of the Labor years, particularly I note the years from about 2007 onwards. The rot really set in when former Treasurer Terry Mackenroth left; that is when things blew apart and I just want to make that clear today. Mr Mackenroth kept things under control, as far as I could see—well, reasonably under control, I could still be critical. If you asked me, Mr Chairman, I could go and find a few things to say, but Mr Mackenroth kept it together and things then exploded when he left. So I do make that point.

I want to be fair about these things, but what happened from 2007 onwards was nothing short of financial negligence, and for some of that time the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Mulgrave were in the cabinet. If it pains them to hear these unpleasant truths about their poor and reckless financial management today, well, I say sorry, tough. That is their record and they must stand accountable for that. It is a pity that the member for Mulgrave will not stand accountable for that.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thanks, Chair, but I would like an answer to my question.

CHAIR: The Premier is answering the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, he is not.

CHAIR: I will bring the Premier to answer the question—

Ms PALASZCZUK: The question is about taxpayers' money on the advertising campaign. It is a specific question to do with the estimates SDS.

CHAIR: The preamble that he gave was that he is giving some background to it and he will go to answer the question.

Mr PITT: With respect, Chair, while he was compiling the answer—which should only take a couple of moments—I could point him to the relevant page in the budget paper if he likes.

CHAIR: The Premier is answering the question.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, before I move on, I make the point that I am determined today to give comprehensive and fulsome answers because Queenslanders deserve nothing less. It is their money and I want them to understand how we are spending it because I assure them, I promise them, that we are spending it far more wisely than the Leader of the Opposition or the member for Mulgrave ever did when they were in the cabinet. I also point out that the Leader of the Opposition said in the media in the last day or two, I believe it was 14 July, the following—

And to the ministers, let me say this: don't for one minute think that you can give yes or no answers. You are paid over \$300,000 and I want full answers to my questions.

Well, I say to the Leader of the Opposition, I am giving fulsome answers to government, opposition and Independent members' questions today and I will continue to do so. If I may continue, Mr Chairman, I am answering the question because I need to talk about why we are talking about the Strong Choices campaign. Just to recap: we have balanced the books or will have in the 2015-16 financial year but there will be \$80 billion worth of debt which is down from the \$85 billion that the Australian Labor Party projected themselves. It is about time the member for Mulgrave actually fessed up that he has been telling untruths on this one outside the chamber—

Mr PITT: I have a point of order, Mr Chairman. I have sat here for the last five minutes being verballled by the Premier about untruths. I have faithfully represented the budget papers every time I have spoken, so I would appreciate it if the Premier answered the question instead of verballing me. If he wishes to have a debate, that is a very different regard.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I would like to request an adjournment so I may go and get some materials which demonstrate what the member for Mulgrave has said in relation to debt and deficit.

Mr PITT: So it is a debate now, is it, Premier?

Ms PALASZCZUK: With all due respect, Chair, I asked a question about taxpayers' money on the Strong Choices advertising campaign. It is a very simple question that anybody else, I believe, would be able to answer. I can move on to another question if the Premier does not want to answer the question.

CHAIR: The Premier is answering the question—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Well, how much is it?

CHAIR: He is giving a full background. Again, you asked for—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I did not ask for a full background.

CHAIR: Premier, are you happy to continue on?

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I am going to answer the question. This is an answer to the question.

CHAIR: Premier, thank you.

Mr NEWMAN: Going back to what I just said, this is a parliamentary committee and if you mislead this committee, if you lie to this committee, it is a criminal offence. The Labor Party did not want that. We introduced this accountability measure after they moved to protect the former member for Sandgate, Gordon Nuttall, who is one of two Labor cabinet ministers who have done or are doing time in jail.

The member for Mulgrave—and this is an important point—has made various statements in the media over the last two years denying the financial train wreck that this government was left to clean up, and if we can have an adjournment I am happy to bring into this committee hearing and read into the record the things that he has said that would attempt to obfuscate or contradict what I have said today, which are the correct figures contained therein in the budget papers.

Mr PITT: Mr Chair, the Premier is going off on a tangent here. This is ridiculous.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Chair, I have asked a question about taxpayers' money for the funding of the Strong Choices campaign. I have asked this question five times I believe now.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, with the greatest of respect, I was answering the question. The Leader of the Opposition interrupted me and then the member for Mulgrave interrupted me and claimed he was being verballled. He is not being verballled.

Mr PITT: I am being verballled.

CHAIR: The Premier has said he can actually get documents—

Mr NEWMAN: I am happy, if they wish to have an adjournment, I will get—

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, we just want the answer to this question.

Mr PITT: We are not happy with an adjournment and it is not up to the Premier to suggest one, Mr Chair. With respect, if the Premier wishes to go and bring other documents in, he has members of this committee, including myself, at a disadvantage because we are not able to debate him on the matter. This is getting to the point of moving away from what estimates are about. He is not answering the question, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR: We are not going to have an adjournment. The Premier can get those papers at lunchtime and bring them back in and present those.

Mr NEWMAN: Well, Mr Chair, with your indulgence, after lunch I will table comments made by the member for Mulgrave which clearly demonstrate that what I have said is 100 per cent true. Queenslanders need to understand that those sitting on your left—I am not of course referring to the member for Gladstone; she had no part in it—were members of the cabinet that created the financial problem that the Strong Choices campaign is now attempting to correct. So let me continue with my answer.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: So we have reached a situation where we—

Mr PITT: Mr Chairman, this is embarrassing.

CHAIR: Continue, Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: If the member for Mulgrave just settles down, he will get the comprehensive answer that he and Queenslanders deserve. We have \$80 billion worth of debt but a balanced budget, so how do we then deal with it? Over the last four months, the government has had the integrity and the openness to go out and talk to Queenslanders about these challenges and we have said that we want to build the Queensland of the future. We want to build the roads, the public transport infrastructure, the hospitals, the schools, the research and development infrastructure and the cultural infrastructure, but the only way we can do that is through three potential means. One is to raise taxes and charges. One is to cut services, front-line services, and we will not do that because we have not done that in two years; we have re-energised and revitalised these front-line services. The third way is to actually sell some assets or recycle the money from those assets—that is probably the way to put it—and plough it back into debt reduction and then of course the infrastructure building that I am referring to.

So we went out for three or four months and we consulted the community, and that exercise was costly. We now are into the next phase where we have had the honesty and decency to tell Queenslanders what our plan is—that is, here is the plan and here is what we are talking about and why we are spending the money. We are talking about the sale, or the sale of long-term leases, on assets that the people of Queensland own that could, we believe, accrue at least \$33.6 billion, as I recall. How would we spend that money? We would use it to reduce Labor's debt of \$80 billion by \$25 billion. So the debt would come down to \$55 billion.

Before I move on and talk about the \$8.6 billion remaining, I point out that that debt reduction itself would save approximately \$150,000 per hour in interest on Labor's accumulated debt. Again, as I said earlier, think what we could do with \$150,000 every hour. Instead of it taking an hour to get that social housing dwelling built, it would be three hours of interest savings on the debt of the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Mulgrave and the Labor Party—three hours to buy a social house to house a Queensland family. So there would be \$25 billion to reduce debt and \$8.6 billion to go into various infrastructure initiatives, and right now we want Queenslanders to talk to us about those initiatives. What the debate really should be about right now is how that money gets spent.

So in relation to advertising, that cost has already been put out there. It is in the public domain. I am not sure why they are asking about it today. I understand, as I recall, a figure of around \$6 million. But before I conclude, I just make the point—

Ms PALASZCZUK: So is that the total cost to date?

Mr NEWMAN: I just make the point, Mr Chairman—

CHAIR: The Premier is answering the question.

Mr NEWMAN: I am answering the question, Mr Chair.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am not getting an answer. I am sorry, Chair; it is a very simple question.

CHAIR: The Premier is still answering the question. He has not finished. He is still answering the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I want the total cost to date.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I make the point that the government spent \$49.09 million on advertising placement in the first 26 months of government, from April 2012 to May 2014. The previous government spent \$81.78 million in the first 26 months of a parliamentary term, from April 2009 to May 2011. I hope the person who has handed me this has got their calculation correct, but it seems to demonstrate a 40 per cent reduction in advertising expenditure. If the honourable member would like the precise figure within the allocation that we have talked about of \$6 million, I suggest she put that to the Treasurer.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sorry, can I just be clear. What is the final amount of the Strong Choices campaign? How much has been spent? We have sat here for 20 minutes or 15 minutes or 10 minutes, but please, Premier, surely someone in your department must know how much is the total spend on the Strong Choices campaign up until today.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, again, let me just go back over what I have been talking about—

Ms PALASZCZUK: We just want a figure.

Mr NEWMAN: Why do we have the campaign? The campaign is being implemented because we are up front with Queenslanders about how we build this great state going forward and reduce the Labor Party's debt. The figure that has been talked about as an overall allocation was \$6 million. The

honourable member wants the expenditure figure to date and I want to give a precise figure, and the best person to do that is the Treasurer of this state who I am sure will take note of today's proceedings and give her a figure to date.

Ms PALASZCZUK: But you are the Premier of the state.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. The Premier has given his answer.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I ask the director-general a question? I have only really asked one question.

CHAIR: Sure.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you. Director-General, I refer to the Strong Choices campaign—

Mr NEWMAN: I have a point of order, Mr Chairman. I am sorry, but I think I have heard about four or five questions during the last 10 or 15 minutes but I will defer to your ruling.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Director-General, I refer to the Strong Choices campaign. Has the government had any advice on whether the Strong Choices campaign complies with the government's advertising code of conduct?

Mr Grayson: Mr Chairman, we have a rigorous process for any advertising campaign that is undertaken by government. It must meet certain requirements, it is subjected to the government advertising committee and any advertising campaign that is authorised goes through that process.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have a follow-up question. Who is on that committee?

Mr NEWMAN: I rise to a point of order.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is a follow-up question.

Mr NEWMAN: I rise to a point of order, Mr Chairman, and you know what my point of order is. Come on.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. You have asked your two questions. Mr Flegg, do you have a question?

Dr FLEGG: I refer to page 5 of the DPC SDS, revitalisation of front-line services. Could the Premier tell the committee how the Queensland government revitalised front-line service delivery in the areas of agriculture, fisheries and forestry and how this has contributed to a brighter future for rural Queensland?

Mr NEWMAN: Everything we do in this government is geared towards revitalising front-line services and it is ultimately directed towards achieving great economic outcomes for the people of this state. If you look at any of the four pillars, we are working systematically towards industry plans that are developed with those industry stakeholders and actually set out a long-term pathway for those industries.

Australians today quite rightfully can be a bit jaundiced about politics and politicians and a short-term focus on this relentless 24-hour news cycle. While obviously having to deal with those very real challenges as well, this government wants to plan, typically with an out-to-30-year perspective. So we have been undertaking the Queensland Plan and the overall message of Queenslanders was that education and skills training was a particular focus, and I think I referred earlier on to my release of the Queensland Plan. Within that, we then talk about the four pillars. Whether we are talking about tourism, construction, agriculture or resources, we are then working on long-term plans for each of those sectors. If the member would like to ask me a question on that later on, I would be happy to oblige. We are looking at what each industry need is going forward over that time horizon. If it is about regulation that affects a particular industry, we are dealing with that. If it is about obstacles from government, we are dealing with that. If it is about research and development in a particular area, we are of course dealing with that as well. Then when it comes to skills training, in accordance with my previous answer, we are trying to link up the needs of industry with the service providers who would educate our kids and then obviously provide an attractive offering to those young people to enter those industries. That is the gist of it. It is about long-term planning, it is about proper partnerships and it is about a real vision for the state for a brighter future.

CHAIR: I would like to ask a question. Page 6 of the DPC SDS relates to the Great Results Guarantee, and it has been an absolute blessing in my electorate. Can the Premier outline to the committee what principals and teachers across the state have been able to achieve with the federal funds that Queensland secured for the Great Results Guarantee?

Mr NEWMAN: Everything that we do in Education is aimed at achieving better student outcomes. We want a bright future for all our kids. Every parent wants that. I am so proud of my kids. They are young adults now. They have been through the school system. One has actually finished her tertiary education and is out there in the world, in the workforce, achieving her dreams. My younger one is in the middle of her engineering degree. When you dwell on that, you are reminded about what all parents want for their kids, and that is what we are about. We are about making sure that everybody's children can have those sorts of opportunities.

When I first became Premier I spent a lot of time with the principals in my own electorate and I continue to do so. It is something I greatly enjoy. I really do enjoy my interaction with my school communities: people like Pat Murphy at the Ashgrove State School, Peter Churchward at the Oakleigh State School and John Collins at Hilder Road State School. These individuals and others in the independent and Catholic schools are people to whom I have listened about the needs of the sector. I am quite happy to acknowledge today that it was their advice particularly, their representations and obviously the consultations I then had with the education minister and his team that led to the way that we approach the increased federal funding.

The federal government has provided additional funding to every state and territory under its Students First—A fairer funding agreement for schools initiative. Once we knew we were getting an extra \$131 million this calendar year, our approach was to take on board what I was alluding to earlier—and this is it—the money needs to go to the early years. Isn't it interesting that high schools in this country and in this state receive more money per student than primary schools and yet all the academic research, all the feedback I have received from these great principals—and there are others I have not mentioned today—was that the money needs to go into primary education and, indeed, kindergartens. Maybe we will get a question about that later on. We need to make sure that the kids are helped in those very early formative years—kindergarten, prep, 1, 2 and 3 particularly. If we can put the resources into those early years and focus on every child and make sure that they attain those building block achievements, obviously in literacy and numeracy, we will really set them up to succeed in the education system.

I hope people can see how passionate I am about this. Again, I go back to this disparity of high schools getting more money than primary schools on a per capita basis. When we heard that we were getting \$131 million more for our kids from this federal government, I said to John-Paul, 'I am sure we are in agreement that while the high schools need to get a fair share as well, the focus should be, as the academic researchers and the principals have said, "It's got to go to primary schools," ' and that is what we have done. So we are receiving \$131 million and we are then giving it to primary schools and high schools, but the primary schools will get the lion's share. I think it is 75 per cent of the initial allocation.

I make another point. We are the only state, I am advised, that is giving the funding direct to schools so that the school principal and the community can decide how the funds are best spent. I think I said earlier on that we are not clipping the ticket on the way through. The money has been calved up transparently with disadvantaged schools and those in disadvantaged communities getting loadings of extra money. Obviously, remote schools and those in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will get a bit more so that, again, the resources go where they are needed.

I believe that this is going to make a real, positive difference. I think I have told the story before about a child at one of the schools in my electorate who comes from a very troubled background and who has been—and this is in a relative sense—in a lot of strife at their primary school. However, the feedback that I am getting from the relevant principal is that this program has made a positive difference to this child's life. Indeed, this very proud principal almost burst through the door of my electorate office one Friday afternoon about six to eight weeks ago and said, 'Cam, you've got to have a look at these scores.' Obviously privacy prevents me from saying any more in the way of detail. However, this is a child about whom people were very worried and concerned. She was from a broken home and had a terrible background, yet with the great support of her school, the principal, the teachers and this money that is providing the extra resource, there is an example of how the program makes a difference.

Finally, let me give you the words of a Queensland principal who emailed me directly, and I will close on this note. This is what one of the principals said, 'I have worked for Education Queensland since 1985 and honestly believe that the Great Results Guarantee is the most important and significant program introduced over my 28 years with EQ, a program that will have significant and ongoing positive results for the children of Queensland.' That is music to my ears and I am sure to everyone else's ears at this committee hearing.

CHAIR: Member for Gladstone, we will probably get one solid question in and you will have a question after lunch, too. Member for Gladstone, you have five minutes.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Could you outline please the consultation undertaken—when, how and with whom—prior to the formalising and drafting of legislation establishing the Policy Development Fund?

Mr NEWMAN: Can I hear the question again, please?

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Could you outline please the consultation undertaken—when, how and with whom—prior to the formalising and drafting of legislation establishing the Policy Development Fund?

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I thank the member for that. I was thinking she was coming from a completely different perspective. I am not sure where I would start, but I reflect that the former government put in place a very complex system of so-called electoral reforms which at the time were seen as reforms perhaps directed at a certain individual who looms large in Australian politics today. It was a complex system, an unwieldy system and it saw political parties getting very significant increases in funding. It was many, many millions of dollars—I could get the figure for the member if she wished—an unprecedented amount of extra money.

We have worked hard on a comprehensive package of electoral reforms to restore accountability to government to clean up the electoral amendments made by Labor in the final term that have cost Queenslanders dearly. I personally do not have a lot of time for public funding of political parties. That is nothing new; it is something I have said before today. Nevertheless, it is here today. I know that if it was removed, frankly, certain critics would suggest that in some ways that was antidemocratic. So public funding is here and it is staying.

What Queenslanders should be very happy about is that, following extensive public consultation—there were committee hearings, there was a process and I am sure the honourable member can recall that this legislation was out for a long period of time—250 submissions were received in response to the discussion paper. After all of that, with the new legislation, the happy news for Queenslanders is that taxpayer funding for political parties has been reduced, and I am very happy with that. Taxpayer funding for political parties has been reduced and it saves taxpayers \$8 million in terms of the period. The annual policy development payments are based on a party's relative electoral support and it is ensuring parties continue their important role in engaging in developing and sharing policy while effectively representing the community.

The other point I make on the reforms is that they have brought political spending and donation regulations in line with Commonwealth legislation to make sure that the Queensland electoral legislation is not ruled invalid. If you want to debate things in isolation that is one thing, but the overall great news is that political parties are being paid less and millions of dollars are being saved from the flawed Bligh Labor government's so-called reforms.

CHAIR: The committee will now break for lunch and resume at 1.15 pm.

Proceedings suspended from 12.00 pm to 1.15 pm



CHAIR: The committee is now ready to resume its examination of the portfolio of the Premier, including the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Queensland Family and Child Commission. Welcome. The member for Gladstone has a number of questions.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Thank you, Mr Chair. Premier, this question is in relation to the Policy Development Fund. In the 2014-15 budget how much has been allocated to the Policy Development Fund?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the member for the question, Mr Chair. I will just get some numbers on that. Can I just clarify, Mr Chairman, because I think some of the officials have misunderstood. The member, if I understand correctly, is after the policy funding allocation for political parties under the reforms in the Electoral Act?

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: It is called the Policy Development Fund.

Mr NEWMAN: I would make the point that you have not mentioned the Electoral Act in any of your questions, and that is why there has been a bit of confusion just then. So it is the policy funding allocation—

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: The Policy Development Fund, as the legislation calls it.

Mr NEWMAN: That is what I understood you were after.

CHAIR: Do you need a few minutes, Premier, or we will have another question and come back to this one?

Mr NEWMAN: Just wait a second, please. I will take the question on notice, Mr Chairman.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: My third question may need to go on notice too. Given that eligibility to access the fund was backdated—that is, the bill was passed in May 2014, assented to in May 2014, but eligibility for payments was backdated to 2013—how many parties have applied for funding and how much has been paid to each?

Mr NEWMAN: Again, Mr Chairman, I will take the question on notice. But I do make the point and reassure the member again that the overall principle that is at work here is that political parties are receiving millions of dollars less in taxpayers' funds than under the former government's policy and the former government's Electoral Act. I would again just reiterate that I have never been comfortable with taxpayer funded measures for political parties, but because of the actions of those who have come before us it now seems to be an entrenched thing not just in this state, but other states and nationally. It is water under the bridge now, but there needed to be a more mature and sensible debate about the funding of political parties. Often, I am afraid, simplistic and rather limited commentary on these matters has led to this situation.

By the way, there are other people, of course, in politics and other political parties who disagree with my point of view. But as a taxpayer, surely you would want your money to go to schools, hospitals, police and front-line services. That is where I want the money to go, and that is why this government changed the rules so that there would be less money going to political parties from taxpayers. But in terms of the specifics, we will get that answer on notice to the honourable member.

CHAIR: Premier, I have a question for you, and I refer to page 5 of the DPC SDS. Can the Premier highlight to the committee how schools and communities are being empowered and teachers are being rewarded and recognised so that Queensland kids have a brighter future in the Queensland state school system?

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, thank you for your question. Excuse me for a moment; I just need to consult with my chief of staff. I just had to correct something there. I am afraid there was a bit of a misunderstanding in my office on a certain critical and quite important policy issue. It was also a scheduling matter.

Mr Chairman, everything we do in education is aimed at achieving better student outcomes and a brighter future for our kids. As I said earlier, we are doing this by directing funding particularly to early years education. I have alluded to teacher quality with the Great Teachers = Great Results program, and the thing I particularly wanted to talk about a bit more is the issue of school autonomy and enhancing student discipline. This empowerment issue I think is just so critical to the way forward. Funding under the Great Results Guarantee initiative for 2014 has delivered to 1,233 Queensland state schools to build on student literacy and numeracy skills—the fundamentals, the building blocks. The Great Results Guarantee commits schools to guarantee that every one of our kids will achieve either the national minimum standard for literacy and numeracy for their year level or—and I think this is the exciting thing—an evidence based plan to address—sorry, Mr Chairman, I have a really bad post-nasal drip today, and I am sorry if I am pausing a lot. It is because I keep having this urge to cough, so I am sorry about that. They either have to reach that national minimum standard, or they have to have an evidence based plan to address the specific learning needs of the kids.

I am going to keep stressing this because it is important and it marks out the great policy and operational procedural differences between us and other states: we are the only state that is giving the funding directly to the schools so that principals and communities can decide on how those funds are best spent. We are also committed to giving state schools greater autonomy in decision making, cutting red tape and removing layers of management to improve outcomes for students through the Independent Public Schools initiative.

May I, while I am speaking about this today, acknowledge that when we were in opposition the member for Moggill was a key champion of the IPS initiative. He personally put an enormous amount of time and effort into researching this. As I recall, he travelled to Western Australia to actually see this firsthand, and I think it is important today to pay tribute to his policy development work. I note the member for Gladstone was asking about policy issues before. Whilst in opposition the member for Moggill did the hard yards in terms of IPS, and I pay tribute to him today for doing just that.

Now, why? Research is showing that autonomy can improve school performance and of course student outcomes, which is why the government is investing \$21 million in the Independent Public Schools initiative. There is an opportunity for 120 schools to become IPS over a four-year period from 2013 to 2016. Our original target was to have 60 independent public schools by 2014. We are now ahead of that with a total of 80 in 2013-14, again giving more communities a greater say in how their schools are run. The Independent Public Schools initiative provides opportunities for enhanced local government, advancing innovation, a locally tailored workforce, financial flexibility, the opportunity to build for the future and public accountability, transparency and performance. That is because when the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Mulgrave were in cabinet, I am afraid they were beholden to unions. They would not come at accountability and empowerment because that is not the way it worked from, sadly, the teachers union at the time. There has been varying support since. We have seen them support the initiative more recently. As I recall, they seem to have withdrawn that support, and I would encourage them to be on board with it because it is a great initiative.

In terms of what happens, the current arrangement is that schools receive a one-off payment of \$50,000 to assist with the transition and an extra \$50,000 in funding each year. Students are set to benefit from an education accord which maps out a 30-year vision for this state with a strong plan for a brighter future for Queensland. The vision will build on the Queensland Plan to determine priorities for our schools and ensure present and future students are given the best possible education and job opportunities.

I want to turn now to teacher reward and recognition, and I alluded to Great Teachers = Great Results. We want to build on the strengths of the existing school model and focus on the most important component in the education system, which is of course the teacher. I am sure, Mr Chairman, many of us can reflect now as adults on a teacher, an individual—perhaps it was the principal—in our time in the education system who made a great difference to our lives. I can still recall the great teachers that I had as a child in the state school system in primary school. I can remember a great teacher over 40 years ago at a very small school in the western suburbs of Sydney passionately talking about the need to protect the environment. Back in those days the focus was on companies that were polluting. In about 1972 I recall going down to the Georges River which flows through Liverpool and taking water samples downstream of some rather heavy industries and sending those samples to—I am not going to take the interjection from the honourable member—a chap by the name of Jago, and I think you will find he was the minister for the environment in New South Wales in those days. What I mean is that I remember that classwork like it was only yesterday, and I just use that to illustrate what we are about: we are passionate. We believe that a teacher who is passionate and who has the necessary skills is someone who will make a positive difference to the lives of children.

The plan provides \$537 million over five years. I may have spoken incorrectly earlier. I am just reading this note here. I think I may have said four years in an earlier statement. So if that is incorrect I correct that. It provides \$537 million over five years. It is about elevating teaching standards.

The things we will see in the plan are 15 actions aimed at lifting standards of teaching and giving schools more flexibility to get on with the job, including supporting teachers with mentoring, training and resources; rewarding outstanding performers with career opportunities, scholarships and bonuses; allowing each school to have more say in how they are run; fast-tracking the careers of high-performing teachers; creating new master teacher positions to ensure quality teachers are working where they are needed most; and strengthening state school discipline.

The final thing I wanted to talk about was the education accord. I hope my comments earlier about the Queensland Teachers Union are taken in the spirit in which they were intended. It was not to be hypercritical of them; it was just to say again, 'Please get on board with the independent public schools initiative because we need your support.' I now want to talk about this accord. We have announced that in September we will bring together teachers, principals, parents, members of the community, the members of this parliament and union representatives to hammer out an accord on the future of education in this state. I see this as critically important.

There are many areas, I am afraid, of disagreement that have been around for years—old chestnuts that we need to, hopefully, deal with so we can make sure education has at the core of policy in this state a level of agreement and buy-in that maps in with what the community said in the Queensland Plan. In the Queensland Plan planning process people said how importantly they viewed education. We need to actually now respect that call by the community—the 80,000 people I have referred to who have had involvement—and reach an agreement. I am asking all parties to come together in a spirit of good faith to actually hammer out such an accord. That will occur on 25

September this year. Again, that accord will be—I am confident we will get somewhere meaningful—part of our strong plan for a bright future for Queensland and the great people of this state and, most importantly, of course, our kids.

Ms PALASZCZUK: My question is to the director-general. Director-General, you may have to take this on notice. Previously the Premier talked about jobs and we asked about the number of jobs that have been lost in the public sector. Could you please advise the committee the total number of jobs that have been lost in the government owned corporations?

Mr Grayson: If the member would like to just wait one moment, I suspect we do not have that level of detail here but please let me check.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy for you to take it on notice. I understand that Helen Gluer reported to one of the estimates committees that around 600 jobs had been lost in Queensland Rail. I am happy to put it, if you are happy to take it, on notice under section 183 of the standing orders.

CHAIR: Would you like to take it on notice?

Mr Grayson: With the Premier's approval.

CHAIR: We can give you a few moments to chase it up.

Mr NEWMAN: Could we just see if we have those figures—just for a moment? I would like to provide the answers if we can at the current time, if we can have a minute or two.

CHAIR: Sure. Thank you.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Or you can come back after the break. I am happy with that, too.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I just want to make sure that we give the committee the answer. I can take it on notice. The other thing is, of course, that the Treasurer, who will be appearing before the committee later, who runs the GOC monitoring unit—I am happy to commit, if you wish, to ask the Treasurer to provide that—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like you to answer it.

Mr NEWMAN:—as part of his evidence to the committee if that is acceptable.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like a question on notice.

Mr NEWMAN: Can someone clarify, then, when the answer would be expected in this particular instance?

CHAIR: Four o'clock tomorrow afternoon.

Mr NEWMAN: Okay. Well, we will endeavour to do that. I just want to make sure that we provide a fulsome and comprehensive answer to the question.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: My next question is to the director-general. Director-General, I refer to the Queensland Plan that the Premier was speaking about at length earlier. Could you advise the committee the total amount of expenditure on government advertising for the Queensland Plan?

Mr Grayson: While that information is coming, let me just say that I am really pleased DPC is taking a lead role in the Queensland Plan, both in organising the two events in Mackay and then later in Brisbane and in forming a task force within DPC regarding the Queensland Plan, which will be released at the local government conference in Hervey Bay on 31 July and then the government's response to that in September. I am very pleased that we are playing a lead role in that. I see that that will be an important document guiding the policy advice that we provide to the Premier and cabinet.

I do have some information on the total budget for the Queensland Plan. The total budget is \$4.6 million, of which \$2.23 million is the estimated actual for the 2013-14 year. I think the honourable member's question was specifically about the advertising component of that.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The television advertisements, the print. If you could break that down, that would be helpful.

Mr Grayson: Okay. The information I have available is that in the period July to October 2013 advertising for the Queensland Plan totalled just over \$663,000.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Director-General, I refer to page 26 of the SDS relating to employee expenses. I note that you have utilised the services of the Crown Solicitor in relation to litigation against the ABC and the *Australian*. I do not want to comment on the litigation. I am being very clear here. I just want to ask you how much taxpayers money has been utilised to date in relation to that?

Mr NEWMAN: I might have—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am asking the director-general. I am allowed to ask the director-general. I am not asking the Premier.

CHAIR: Mr Grayson, and then we will go to the Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you.

CHAIR: Sorry, Premier, do you have information?

Mr NEWMAN: I am just looking at the bits of paper in front of us, Mr Chairman. I seem to have a more up-to-date figure. But if the Leader of the Opposition wants an earlier cut-off period—

Ms PALASZCZUK: You can hand it to the director-general, if you want to. I am asking the director-general.

Mr NEWMAN: No, Mr Chairman. I will take a question from the Leader of the Opposition, if she wishes, on the costs of the plan. I believe that Queenslanders deserve to know—

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, we are on to litigation now. It is a different question. We have moved on.

CHAIR: It is a different question.

Mr NEWMAN: Okay.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Mr Grayson, just a rough estimate would be good.

Mr Grayson: Okay. Thank you, Mr Chairman. Let me just clarify that we are talking about—I mean, there are a broad range of legal issues covered by the department, but you are specifically asking for—

Ms PALASZCZUK: The matters that are involving yourself.

Mr Grayson: Okay. Thank you.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Solely.

Mr Grayson: Yes. Mr Chairman, it is regrettable that the department does need to incur expenditure on issues such as this. In terms of the specific answer to the question, for 2013-14 legal costs incurred for the matters that the honourable member is talking about amount to just under \$33,000.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you. I have a question now for the Premier. It is in relation to SDS page 5, where it states that DPC is responsible for 'managing the business of government'. I want to ask you a question about a very serious matter. It is in relation to a media release that was issued by the Chief Justice on 20 June. My question is: did the Premier or anyone from his office have any contact with the then Chief Justice before the media release was issued?

Mr NEWMAN: I am a little confused. Which Chief Justice are we referring to?

CHAIR: Would you like to table that document?

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is on the public record. It is a press release that was issued on 20 June by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Do you want me to table it?

Mr NEWMAN: Could I have the name of the Chief Justice, so we are absolutely clear who we are talking about?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The media release is issued from Paul de Jersey.

Mr NEWMAN: Okay. And it was issued in the last financial year?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes.

CHAIR: Would you like to read this document?

Mr NEWMAN: No, Mr Chairman. I am going to ask you, please—

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is a very simple question and it is a very serious matter. Did you or anyone from your office have any contact with the Chief Justice before this statement was issued?

CHAIR: I am going to ask: what is the relevance to the SDS?

Ms PALASZCZUK: We are allowed to ask questions about the appointment process of serious matters. The SDS is very clear at page 5 that it is responsible for 'managing the business of government'. It is a very simple question. Obviously the Premier does not want to answer the question.

CHAIR: I do not know if you really want to play politics on this, but, I mean—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am asking a very straightforward question.

CHAIR: I am asking for the relevance. How is this relevant to the estimates?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have given you the SDS reference, Mr Chairman. It is very relevant. I have asked the Premier. Will he answer this question?

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I go back to my opening statement this morning. I indeed indicated my preparedness to have an adjournment while the Leader of the Opposition, who has been in this parliament longer than I, acquainted herself with the rules of the parliament, the standing orders, and consulted with the Clerk. I am sorry: this does not, in my very firm opinion, have anything to do with the funding of the upcoming financial year for the operation of the courts in the state of Queensland. The rules here—

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is about administering—

CHAIR: Excuse me. The Premier is—

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is about being open and transparent. That is what it is about.

Mr NEWMAN: Well, openness and transparency has been mentioned. I am going to respond to that interjection, if I may, Mr Chairman. Let me do a bit of a compare and contrast between the former government, which the Leader of the Opposition was a member of, and this administration. Let us start with the provision that states it is a criminal offence to lie in these hearings or in the parliament. We reintroduced that, Mr Chairman, because we believe in people telling the truth to the people of Queensland in their parliament. But the Leader of the Opposition was in a cabinet that was the inheritor of that situation. Their party changed the law to protect one of their ministers, who actually misled one of these committees—not misled but lied to one of these committees. So if we are going to talk about openness and talk about accountability we need to have the context that the Labor Party made changes to the law to protect a minister—Gordon Nuttall—who lied during this very same budget process.

I make the observation that the only cabinet ministers who have served jail time over the last 20 years from this Queensland parliament or from the executive of the Queensland government are members of the Leader of the Opposition's party. I make the point that 14 years ago there had to be a commission of inquiry into the activities of the Australian Labor Party, known as the Shepherdson inquiry, and arguably there are people in the Labor Party today—

Ms PALASZCZUK: There is no relevance to this question, no relevance. Chair, I ask you to rule on relevance.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, if the Leader of the Opposition wants to ask a question—

Ms PALASZCZUK: And you won't answer it.

Mr NEWMAN:—talk over me, make interjections—

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, you just won't answer it—secret.

Mr NEWMAN:—and not actually—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Secrecy.

CHAIR: I ask for the interjections to cease, please.

Mr NEWMAN: There has been another interjection which is about secrecy, so I will come to that in a moment. But we saw the Shepherdson inquiry uncover all sorts of revelations about the malfeasance and indeed illegal conduct within the Australian Labor Party, and arguably there are people still within the member's party who have never probably been fully exposed for their role. But I shall move on.

Let's talk about openness. What did the former government do in relation to dealing with right to information, or RTI, requests? That is right: they had political staffers—political staffers—in political offices processing those applications. It is quite interesting to see the difference between the way we run it and the way they run it. We have a situation where we get the professional officers of the departments to handle those applications.

The secrecy interjection was thrown at me. Well I throw this back, Mr Chairman. In 2013-14, as an example, my office received 51 valid RTI applications and 95 per cent of the documents were located and were released. In 2010-11, when the Leader of the Opposition was a member of the Queensland cabinet, when the member for Mulgrave, who sits to her left was a member of the cabinet—

Ms PALASZCZUK: We are examining your government.

Mr NEWMAN:—the former Labor Premier released less than 25 per cent of the documents found in response to RTI applications.

Mr PITT: I raise a point of order, Mr Chairman. If there are going to be rulings on relevance in relation to a broad ranging question regarding managing the business of government, surely there must be a ruling when it comes to the broad ranging answer which has nothing to do with the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition. This has been going on for several minutes now. It is in response to, as I understand it, an interjection and this is getting to the point of having no relevance.

The Leader of the Opposition asked a question. It was relevant because it was about the Premier's office and members of his office having contact or not. They are staff. It is obviously relevant. Estimates is not just about projections of funding of the future year; estimates is about the immediate past year. So it is irrelevant whether this is related to this financial year or last year. In both cases it is in regard to a very serious appointment, as the Leader of the Opposition has outlined. I ask for your ruling on relevance because the Premier is running away with it here.

CHAIR: I ask the Premier to close.

Mr NEWMAN: I am happy to answer the question, and that is indeed what I am doing today. I make the observation before I get—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes or no?

Mr NEWMAN: May I quote the Leader of the Opposition?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No. You have given the big—

Mr NEWMAN: May I quote the leader of the Opposition?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No. You have given it and now I am asking you to answer the question—the specific question.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, there was an article on the *Brisbane Times* website titled 'Opposition puts government on notice as LNP defends estimates scheduling' by one Amy Remeikis. It was published on 14 July 2014 at 1.18 pm. I quote the Leader of the Opposition—

"And to the ministers, let me say this: Don't for one minute think that you can give yes or no answers.

Full stop.

Ms PALASZCZUK: And you have given a full explanation and you still have not answered my question.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman—

CHAIR: Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I have heard what the Leader of the Opposition has said. I respect what the Leader of the Opposition has said, and today wherever possible I will do my utmost to give fulsome answers. Wherever possible I will not give yes or no answers today because that is what the Leader of the Opposition has quite stridently demanded, and I respect that wish. So let me—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Will the Premier answer the question?

CHAIR: It would be helpful if we did not have the interjections. Premier, the question at hand—

Mr NEWMAN: I am delighted to continue, Mr Chairman. I make the point that the only reason I digressed was because of some interjections which were in the nature of grandstanding which have no basis. This government is far more open and far more transparent. I have given the RTI record. Before I move on, I make one final point on this issue: we have not seen the Leader of the Opposition's diary from March onwards. We have not seen her diary for April, May and June. Isn't it time that it was tabled? If we are talking about secrecy, what has the Leader of the Opposition got to hide? And where are the lobbyists contact registers for the period up to the 2012 election?

Going back to the question, it is not part of the deliberations of this committee to ask questions on that subject. It is not part of it and, if you want to adjourn so you can consult the Clerk, I would be supportive of that. Questions are meant to be about the funding of programs, the funding of programs in the upcoming—

Ms PALASZCZUK: And your office is part of that. Your office is part of that. They are funded by taxpayers, like you and I. We are funded by taxpayers.

CHAIR: Member for Inala, the interjections are not helpful.

Mr NEWMAN: Again, Mr Chairman, I will say this: I consulted the Clerk prior to this today because I have seen in the last couple of years the Leader of the Opposition, who has been here longer than me, throw out the rules of procedure and, indeed, good common-sense manners and courtesy and I was determined today to get my facts straight. I have no wish to see anything other than the rules of this parliament respected, and I say that there are other ways the Leader of the Opposition could ask this question—other times, other places—and of course the parliament in full session would be one of those opportunities.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. I would like to move on to the member for Moggill.

Dr FLEGG: For my question I refer to page 6 of the DPC SDS in regard to reducing red tape. Can the Premier please outline to the committee what the Queensland government is doing to reduce teacher red tape and ensure that teachers have more time to focus on teaching kids than on filling out paperwork so kids have a brighter future in the Queensland state school system?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the member for Moggill for that question. Again, it bears out his long-term interest in education and in what is going on in a detailed sense in our schools. The former regime loved red tape and piled more and more red tape on the principals and of course that had a flow-on effect to the teachers, not just the administrators in schools. What does that mean? That means that the more time teachers or principals are spending filling out forms, writing reports and answering questions the less time they are spending on what they should be doing—which is teaching our kids. The more time that we can unlock for principals and teachers so they can get back into the classroom the better off our kids will be. Everything we are doing is focused on doing things better in our schools. So red-tape reduction in schools, like in the broader community, is an essential part of the agenda of this government.

I just share with members something that I did as a personal initiative but that obviously had a more far-reaching application. I convened a meeting at The Gap State High School courtesy of one of my absolutely outstanding local principals—that is Russell Pollock at The Gap State High School. By the way, The Gap State High School is a beacon on the hill in terms of what public education can achieve. I just urge members to look at what a state high school—not some expensive private school but a state school—is achieving in terms of one measure of the outcomes we want in the education system but obviously a very big one, and that is OP results. I congratulate Russell Pollock and the team at The Gap State High School for what they have been achieving. He knows how I feel anyway.

We convened a meeting. As I recall it was late 2012—I could be wrong on that; it could have been earlier in 2013. But what we did was we asked all the principals from the Ashgrove electorate—whether they be state schools, independent schools or Catholic schools—to come together to talk about education. It was interesting to see the administrative processes between the independent non-state school sector and the state school sector being bounced off the different principals. It was quite an interesting conversation. The other person who was there who I neglected to mention was of course John-Paul Langbroek. It was great for him to hear firsthand what the state school principals and their teams were putting up with in relation to red tape.

So out of that we have established an advisory council of principals to give advice on the best ways to cut red tape. As a result of that very meeting by the way, there have been some quick wins that have been implemented as well. Through the consultation we have developed the *Red tape reduction in Queensland state schools* booklet, which sets out the common-sense actions to get rid of red tape. Let's have a look at some of those things: reducing the number of forms required for various school activities and no longer requiring documents to be completed in both electronic and paper form. Examples of completed actions include less administration involved in the sale of low-cost assets at schools and fewer paperwork approvals for school excursions. There is a whole lot of this stuff that we are working on. We will continue to work to address the remaining actions and reduce the bureaucratic burden on our schools so that our educators can get on with the job of teaching young Queenslanders.

Again, I would like to finish this answer with some testimonials in this area. In this case I am able to actually name names. So here is the first one, which states—

I really appreciate that we are working together to make things easier for principals ... so we can spend more time on core business and that is improving student outcomes.

That is from Karen Tanks, Principal of Rochedale State High School. Another quote states—

The red tape reduction team is currently working closely with HR to streamline a number of processes to ensure that principals have greater autonomy in managing school-based staff.

That is from Corrine McMillan, Principal of Glenala State High School. The final quote states—

Principals have found the team at OneSchool highly receptive to all issues raised by the red tape reduction committee and have developed successful outcomes that benefit every staff member who works in a school.

That is from Patrick Murphy, Principal of Ashgrove State School.

Again, it is about proper planning and a strong commitment to getting rid of unnecessary red tape. Ultimately it is about looking after our kids and making sure they have the best possible education and a bright future.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. I call the member for Stretton.

Mrs OSTAPOVITCH: I have a question for the Premier. I refer to page 5 of the DPC SDS which is about engaging proactively with the private and not-for-profit sectors. Can the Premier outline to the committee how the Queensland government is planning for the future through an innovative public-private partnership that will deliver Queensland kids 10 new schools?

Mr NEWMAN: Again, everything that this government does is about one of two things: it is about supercharging the Queensland economy or it is about providing the best government services for Queenslanders. A key element of the government's strong plan for a brighter future is to revitalise front-line services. It is one of the five pledges that we made at the 2012 election. However, we are still living under Labor's \$80 billion cloud of debt which requires us to look for innovative ideas to continue to deliver more and better services to Queenslanders after years of neglect.

We have to look at innovative ways to deliver in the future the things that Queenslanders need. I talked extensively but appropriately before lunch about the Stronger Choices campaign. This particular initiative that the member refers to is about getting value for money while delivering much needed school infrastructure in high-growth areas. The Aspire Schools PPP project has already delivered seven contracted schools in high-growth areas for 2014. Ten more schools will be delivered from 2015 to 2019—again, in high-growth South-East Queensland areas. There will be 8 prep to six primary schools and two seven to 12 secondary schools catering for around 10,000 students in total during the peak periods of enrolment. The schools will be built at Pimpama, Burpengary, Pallara, Ripley Valley, Springfield, Griffin, Bellbird Park, Redbank Plains and two in Caboolture. These schools will employ over 500 teaching and 130 non-teaching staff. The project is expected to generate around 1,700 jobs a year mostly in the construction sector which will boost economic activity in the SEQ during the five-year construction phase.

The first schools will open for the commencement of the 2015 academic year. The remaining schools will open in 2016 and 2017. The total contract value over the life of the project is \$534 million in net present cost terms. That is significantly lower than the cost of traditional delivery. This is something that the Treasurer was very big on and the CBRC was very big on. A demonstrated value for money case had to be put before this was approved. The plenary schools solution has demonstrated best value for money for Queensland through economies of scale, the innovation that has been shown, efficiency improvements and optimal risk allocation.

Excitingly today, as it happens, the Queensland Schools Planning Commission, which we said we would implement if we were elected to government, has released at parliament a document detailing, as I recall, the recommended delivery of 99 to 119 new schools over the next 17 years. I understand the Minister for Education and the head of the commission, Mr Bob Quinn, released that here today at parliament. My point is this: we have a long-term, strong plan in place for educational infrastructure to fund the schools of the future in this state. Under the Strong Choices campaign—and this is why I did spend some time talking about Strong Choices because it is a very important part of this budget. I know that the member for Mulgrave did not like his party's poor track record in government and financial administration being raised, but I had to. I have to remind Queenslanders of the mess that the financial incompetence of the Australian Labor Party left this state in. The point is under Strong Choices we are saying how we would fund \$1 billion of future schools. The time is coming—in fact, arguably it is long overdue—when the member for Mulgrave and shadow Treasurer will have to stand up, look into the cameras and tell the people of Queensland how he would do it, because all we have seen from him until now is hot air. What we are proposing is a significant investment. It will guarantee that future generations of students will be well looked after. Again, it is all about a brighter future for Queenslanders.

CHAIR: The member for Gladstone has a number of questions.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: My questions are for Mr Armitage, if I might. Mr Armitage, there has been quite a number of recommendations in the Carmody report in relation to your role and the role of the department. What progress has been made on the implementation and the funding in relation to that implementation?

Mr Armitage: Thank you for the question. The progress made to date is the Family and Child Commission commenced on 1 July—two weeks ago today—with funding of \$10.534 million, two million of which is funding for a public education campaign to drive home the point that taking responsibility is a responsibility for everybody: parents, families and communities. The public education campaign will be aimed at bringing forth that view and giving information to parents and the communities about child protection. We are in our early days: two weeks into the life of the Queensland Family and Child Commission. We are in the process of recruiting staff. I have the honour of being the interim Commissioner, and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet together with the Public Service Commission is in the process of aiming to appoint a longer term principal commissioner and a commissioner. The act requires two commissioners to be appointed, one of whom needs to be an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, reflecting the concerning rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children who find themselves in the deep end of the child protection system.

The Family and Child Commission has a critical role in the rollout of the recommendations of his Honour Carmody's report over the next five to 10 years. Its responsibility will be to run a ruler over the progress of the implementation and the effectiveness of those reforms. Those reforms are against the background over the last decade of the numbers of children in out-of-home care doubling and the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children tripling, which is not good for children, not good for families and is unsustainable financially. The cost of the system rose from \$182 million in 2003-04 to \$773 million less than 10 years later. His Honour Carmody projected that, if there are no changes, that was likely to rise to \$1.18 billion by 2020, hence the need for significant change, the hallmark of which I think is directing more resources to family support—the right services at the right time for parents and children before problems escalate. That required them to be in the deeper end, the tertiary end, of the child protection system. We will play a critical role in advising the community and the government that the investment of \$406 million over the next five years has been well spent.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Thank you. I think every person bar a very small handful of people value children and the safety of children beyond anything else.

Mr Armitage: Yes.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: I understand that you are not allowed to give an opinion. I am concerned, however, that the recommendations of the Carmody report could be undermined or compromised in relation to their implementation because of recent controversy in relation to the recommender—the inquirer. Have you noticed any problems in relation to that issue?

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, could I clarify that question on behalf of the official? What was the comment there?

CHAIR: There is a bit of opinion there.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: That is why I asked—

CHAIR: Can you reword that?

Mr NEWMAN: Were you referring to the new Chief Justice?

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Yes.

Mr NEWMAN: I am sorry, I do not think that is appropriate. In fact, it might be against the standing orders. I refer to standing order 115(d), which states—

Questions shall not be asked which reflect on or are critical of the character or conduct of those persons whose conduct may only be challenged on a substantive motion.

My understanding is that refers to a judicial appointment or the Governor, on advice of the Clerk.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Fine. Thank you.

CHAIR: Can you reword—

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: No, that is fine.

CHAIR: Okay, we will move on. I think Mr Pitt has a question.

Mr PITT: My question is to the Premier. Prior to the last election you released a document called Clear Plan for Queensland Families, which talked about 'reducing power bills' and 'saving Queensland families up to \$330 a year'. This relates to Budget Paper No. 2, taxation revenue per capita. I want to bring you back to the statement you made early this morning about not increasing

taxes. The budget papers show that the annual per capita taxation is \$2,601 in the recent budget, up from \$2,271 from the midyear review in 2011. That is a per capita taxation rise of \$330 per person. My question to you, Premier, is your pre-election materials talked about saving families \$330 a year when in fact you have increased costs by \$330 per person. Are the budget papers wrong or have you failed to deliver on your commitment?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the honourable member for his question. I am delighted to talk about the comprehensive way that we have delivered cost-of-living savings for Queenslanders. The first bit of context I have to give is that if Labor had been re-elected there is no doubt that their rapacious requirement for more money out of the hides of Queenslanders would have continued. There is no doubt about it whatsoever. Why do I say that? Because expenses have gone up every year for 10 years on average by 8.9 per cent. The member for Mulgrave, who is now the shadow Treasurer, was a member of cabinet and so for that matter was the Leader of the Opposition. That is why we took strong action to cut expenses, to ensure that we reined in the poor and reckless financial management. As a result, for the first full year of this government expenses growth was restrained to 0.2 per cent.

I will stop right there. What did the shadow Treasurer say during that period? Well, many things but none of them supportive. Government and government finances are not an exercise in magic pudding land. It is about responsible, considered decisions bearing in mind that every time the government spends more than it has before it either has to be borrowed or it has to come out of someone's pocket. That is what we did.

My first part of the answer, very clearly, is that if the member for Mulgrave and his former colleagues—the ones, by the way, that he and his party in the main want to bring back; they are bringing back the gang—had been re-elected the cost pressures on Queenslanders would have been far higher because of the runaway, uncontrolled, poor and reckless financial management.

Mr PITT: Mr Chair, that sounds like a hypothetical statement from the Premier in prophesying what may or may not have happened. I am asking a real question about figures contained in the budget and I would ask that the Premier answer the question.

CHAIR: Premier, I would ask you to address the question.

Mr NEWMAN: Well I am, Mr Chairman, because I have to first give the financial environment in which we operate which drives cost-of-living pressures through taxes and charges on Queenslanders—

CHAIR: Premier, I ask you to be aware of hypotheticals. I have hit the other team up on that a little bit so I ask you to—

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, with the greatest of respect, the questions must be in accordance with the rules. The answers—

Mr PITT: The question is within the rules. The question is related to taxation revenue per capita. This is about a commitment made by you in opposition saying that you were saving families \$330 a year. I mentioned the midyear review which you were at pains to talk about earlier which would have clearly labelled the ability for you in a potential future government to do any of these things. You have made promises that you clearly were not able to keep.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, is this a statement—

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Mulgrave. Premier, I will just ask you to—

Mr NEWMAN: I am happy to answer questions but I just make the point that that was a statement. Mr Chairman, taxation per capita in Queensland is expected to be \$536 lower than the average for other states and territories in 2014-15. We are hardly a high-tax state. Let us talk about the actual delivered savings for Queenslanders. Let us go through them. I am surprised that the shadow Treasurer would have even asked because it does give me the opportunity to detail the very effective savings that we have handed to Queenslanders that we promised.

Firstly, his colleague the Leader of the Opposition has left the room, but I remind him and he may remind her of her involvement in a policy that saw a stated decision to increase public transport fares by 15 per cent every year for five years. You can go and find the actual statements at the time by government. That is how uncaring, that is how shameless, that is how desperate for cash these people were that they would inflict that on commuters. So it was going to be 15 per cent, then 15 per cent, then 15 per cent, then 15 per cent, then 15 per cent.

Mr PITT: So, Premier, are you denying that the \$330 per person is what per capita taxation has gone up—in other words, \$1,320 for a family of four?

CHAIR: Member for Mulgrave, the interjections are not helping the Premier.

Mr PITT: I am cross-examining, with respect, Chair. I am asking him to answer my question and I am referring him back to the question that I asked.

CHAIR: It is not a deposition.

Mr PITT: It is an inquiry actually, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: He is answering the question. Allow him to do that and then you will have your chance to ask a question.

Mr PITT: It would be helpful if the Premier would actually answer the question, Chair, with respect.

CHAIR: The Premier is answering the question.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I would say that any Queenslanders watching right now—and there are cameras in this room—would look at that rather illogical comment that was made by the member for Mulgrave and shake their heads. I say to Queenslanders today who are listening that this is what you get if you re-elect these people. I am clearly talking about public transport and what they were doing, and I will now talk about what we have done and demonstrate the first component of the savings that we promised and, importantly, we are delivering.

So they put it up 15 per cent, 15 per cent, 15 per cent—three years in a row. If they had been re-elected, the stated policy of the now Leader of the Opposition, which was endorsed by the shadow Treasurer when he was in cabinet and by the then Premier Anna Bligh, was to put it up another two years in a row, 15 per cent each year. We halved those increases. That is point No. 1 in terms of savings—they are real savings delivered by this government.

Let us now talk about the initiative that we have brought in where we have introduced free travel for regular commuters using the go card after they have taken nine journeys in a week. That initiative sees savings of up to \$300 annually for the average weekly South-East Queensland commuter. That is point No. 2. That is a saving. I think the shadow Treasurer should start to really take note. The combined public transport savings annually could add up to hundreds of dollars for typical South-East Queensland families—hundreds of dollars alone. In my own electorate, and I referred to this this morning, the savings just from The Gap into the city with those things that we have done in the public transport area are a minimum of \$200 a year.

One of the most hurtful and destructive things that occurred in the last Labor budget in 2011 was the imposition of \$7,000 extra tax on the family home, and the shadow Treasurer, if I am not mistaken, was present in the parliament to vote that one through. It was a massive \$7,000 tax increase on the most significant purchase that any Queenslanders can make. We have taken that tax slug away—another massive saving. While I am on the subject of helping people into new homes but particularly encouraging people to economically buy a new home that is off the plan or being constructed, I mention the very targeted \$15,000 Great Start Grant. We have also frozen family car registration. It was frozen the first year in 2012 and in the second year in 2013 and, in this budget, rego does not go up on the family car, and neither does the traffic improvement levy.

We are also providing a community service obligation payment, a CSO payment, of \$620 million in the 2013-14 financial year—there is always uncertainty about what it will be going forward because of the vagaries of electricity demand and the like, but that is the value of the CSO in the past financial year—to ensure that regional Queenslanders, including the member for Mulgrave's own constituents, get the same fare deal for electricity as those in South-East Queensland.

Mr PITT: So you are claiming credit for the CSO now as one of your initiatives?

Mr NEWMAN: Again, Mr Chairman, these sorts of interjections demonstrate what sort of opposition we have in Queensland today. Any Queenslanders who would objectively watch, including the member's own constituents, would shake their heads. I am comprehensively answering a question item by item which demonstrates clearly that, contrary to the false assertions and misrepresentations of the shadow Treasurer and the members of the Australian Labor Party, this government has provided comprehensive and extensive cost-of-living relief for Queenslanders, particularly vulnerable Queenslanders.

This leads me to the Get in the Game community junior sport initiative which sees vouchers of up to \$150 being made available to help kids from disadvantaged families get in the game and play sport. It deals with insurances, sign-up fees, et cetera. I point out as well that we delivered a one-off payment of \$80 on water bills in South-East Queensland in the 2012-13 financial year. That actually

cost the government \$92 million. I know that again the shadow Treasurer pretends that it was not a meaningful initiative but it was a very important one in that financial year. Finally, I point to again the decision in the 2012-13 financial year costing \$63 million which saw tariff 11 frozen.

Before I conclude, I did refer to statements before lunch by the member for Mulgrave, the shadow Treasurer, that denied debt and deficit. He objected and said that I was verballing him. Well, here is what he said on debt: 'They have tried very, very hard to find a massive black hole that doesn't exist'—member for Mulgrave, *Brisbane Times*, 15 July 2012; 'We will never hear the Premier or Treasurer thank Labor for leaving Queensland's economy in a position of strength'—member for Mulgrave, Queensland Parliament, *Hansard*, 31 July 2012; 'The truth is Queensland is in a strong position, the legacy of a Labor government'—member for Mulgrave, opinion piece, *Cairns Weekend Post*, 1 September 2012; 'There is simply no debt crisis in Queensland'—member for Mulgrave, budget speech, cognate debate, September 2012; and 'The LNP's claim about the level of state debt has been part of a misleading political strategy'—member for Mulgrave, media release, 21 August 2012, the *Australian*, 21 August 2012.

I would like a retraction from the member for Mulgrave that I was verballing earlier on. I made very clearly the point that we had to advertise the issues surrounding the finances of Queensland in terms of the Strong Choices campaign. They were asking questions about that. They objected to me giving a comprehensive answer. He then claimed he was being verballled. Clearly, he has been a long-term debt and deficit denier. He was not being verballled.

Mr PITT: I am being verballled now.

Mr NEWMAN: I was telling nothing but the truth.

CHAIR: Do you want to table that document, Premier?

Mr NEWMAN: I am delighted to table it.

Mr PITT: Please do. It is all on the public record. I stand by my comments.

CHAIR: Do you seek leave to table that?

Mr NEWMAN: I seek leave to table it.

CHAIR: That is approved.

Mr PITT: I have one quick question before you move on. Does the Premier understand the difference between Queensland's economy and Queensland's finances?

CHAIR: That is more a statement than a question.

Mr PITT: No, I asked 'does he'. Answer the question.

CHAIR: Are you happy to answer that, Premier?

Mr NEWMAN: Of course I do. May I just say that at times it has been very clear that the member for Mulgrave does not, or maybe he has been deliberately misleading Queenslanders again. We could go and pull out some more quotes from him and other members of the Labor Party who again put this state into the situation it is in. May I give some gratuitous advice to the Australian Labor Party. The only way to move forward for you as a party, through you, Mr Chairman, is to acknowledge the huge colossal financial ineptitude of the past, apologise for it and put a line in the sand, and then they can move on.

Mr PITT: Mr Chair, I am not going to sit here and be verballled by the Premier again. He is continuing to make statements that obviously as a member of this committee I am not able to retort to because I am limited to a question time.

CHAIR: We have got to move on.

Mr NEWMAN: He is having a good shot at it though, isn't he, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. We are going to move on. I call the member for Murrumba.

Mr GULLEY: My question is to the Premier. I refer to page 7 of the DPC SDS in regard to fostering innovation. Can the Premier please outline what the government is doing to promote science and innovation and can he explain how this will contribute to a brighter future for Queenslanders?

Mr NEWMAN: We have a strong plan to grow research, and the results will create a brighter future that will benefit families across this state, and indeed other Australians will benefit as well. These are cross-border issues and they deliver cross-border benefits. It is also a part of our promise to revitalise front-line services.

There has actually been a proud track record for some years in Queensland by a number of governments and political leaders to support this area. May I reflect today on the way that the Borbidge government initiated significant support to some very important biotechnology and biosciences infrastructure that, I then acknowledge, was strongly supported by former Premier Peter Beattie. I was always somebody who supported what Mr Borbidge and Mr Beattie did in this area, and we intend to continue with that work.

We have released a Science and Innovation Action Plan. This is a blueprint for the future so Queensland can maximise the opportunities from our world-class research infrastructure and institutes and talented researchers in collaboration with the industry. The action plan outlines four specific areas: firstly, to maintain momentum—growing, attracting and retaining talented people; secondly, to collaborate and share knowledge—developing meaningful partnerships between research, industry and end users; thirdly, to help business grow—removing barriers and fostering the growth of small and high-growth potential businesses; and, fourthly, to deliver innovative government—using innovation to achieve improved service delivery.

The Innovation Hub Pilot Project was recently launched, harnessing the expertise of the private sector to develop a range of innovative solutions to significant government problems. The initial challenges to be considered include graffiti, housing asset maintenance, Indigenous health and provision of information for beef producers. We opened the Accelerate Ideas part of the Accelerate Queensland science and innovation program to make a further \$1.5 million in grants available to support collaborations between industry and researchers to demonstrate the commercial viability of a new or existing idea. The program opened on 23 June 2014 and applications will be assessed quarterly until 31 May 2015.

We also launched GoDigitalQld. This is the government's digital economy strategy and action plan. It provides a road map for using digital technologies, content and innovative services to boost productivity and connectivity and puts Queensland on course to become Australia's most digitally interactive state. Again, it is part of our strong plan for a bright future for Queensland.

Mr STEWART: I have a question in relation to page 2 of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet SDS, the government's objectives for the community. Can the Premier please provide an update on how the Queensland government has provided support to farmers who are suffering from the effects of the drought?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the member for that question. The start of my answer is again that everything this government does is about supercharging the Queensland economy and providing the best government services to Queenslanders. For me, this has a very personal angle. As members would know, I used to work in the grain industry. In the final year of my time at Grainco Australia, I ran the grain handling system in the state: the logistics, the storage and handling, the country silos and the port facilities. Most of all, I had an awful lot to do with people on the land in this state down on the Darling Downs, out west, down along the border with New South Wales and also up into Central Queensland in the Deputy Premier's electorate around Biloela and Moura but also further to the west and the north—places into the member for Gregory's electorate up around Emerald and Clermont and the like.

My point is this. For me, agriculture as one of the four pillars is just so critically important. It really is. I just see a very bright future for agriculture, but obviously we are confronted with a very significant drought at the moment. We have been working very hard to grow agriculture and restore its rightful place in the economy. The member for Mulgrave supposedly represents many people on the land. I know they are in the main canegrowers, banana growers and the like, but they just see lip-service from him. I might digress; I do not recall—I could be wrong—any policy statement from the Australian Labor Party in the last two years and three months in relation to agriculture. I do not remember them saying what they would do. There has not been a policy statement. I am not talking about sniping from the sidelines or cheap shots; I am talking about a proper, comprehensive policy statement about how they would take agriculture forward. In contrast, we have a strong plan for agriculture. The department that we re-established, the department that they had got rid of, the department that under a former name and a former government the current Leader of the Opposition's father led, is working again—and I am talking, of course, of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry—to support struggling producers and rural communities affected by drought, getting producers back on their feet, getting communities back on track.

In 2014-15 we have put forward \$25 million in extra drought assistance including \$15.75 million for the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme subsidies and emergency water infrastructure rebates. These infrastructure rebates for water are direct, sensible, pragmatic ways of providing assistance so

that people can get that financial assistance to actually put in bores, pumping equipment, pipe work and the like to water stock et cetera. Earlier on this year out west of Longreach I saw firsthand where that money has been put to good use.

There is \$3.9 million for land rent rebates. I might digress for a moment here. It is part of the question and my answer, and that is what primary producers on government leases pay the government in relation to rent. We are providing relief; we are providing those concessions to assist them through this difficult time. Importantly, this government has a far more enlightened view in relation to this whole issue. The former government, the cabinet that the shadow Treasurer sat in, approved policies that saw a very significant escalation in rents. Essentially, what the heartless former government tried to do was get blood out of a stone. The bitterness that I have seen and heard in rural communities in relation to the former government and the actions of people like the member for Mulgrave, who sat in that cabinet, would alarm people. I do not know how the member for Mulgrave could ever go out to the west and the north-west of this state and look people in the eye given the decisions that he was party to that actually put huge cost pressures on people who are trying to produce food for Queensland and for the world. He and the Bligh administration would not listen to people, particularly the very respected peak agricultural groups when they made representations on this issue.

I continue on. There is also \$3.9 million in community assistance and \$1.45 million in mental health support. On many occasions, again, the Australian Labor Party plays quite outrageous politics on such issues. This government provides social support and assistance to Queenslanders who need it. This money here goes to communities, to organisations that support people who are doing it tough on the land. It is there. There it is; what we are doing is there in black and white.

We have processed over 3,200 Drought Relief Assistance Scheme claims. We have also provided \$250,000 towards the federal government's rural financial counselling service for financial counselling for drought-stricken producers. We opened up selected national parks and areas of state government owned land to drought-stricken graziers to graze their cattle affected not only by drought but also by the disastrous decision of the former federal Labor government to shut down the live export industry. I want to reflect on this for a moment because I do not recall these two things happening: I do not recall the former Labor state government and the now shadow Treasurer doing much at all to support our cattle men and women when the then federal government, in one of the most capricious and reckless acts that they have ever committed, shut down the live cattle export industry again pandering, as they always do, to green radical groups in big, southern cities. How does the member for Mulgrave actually talk to people on the land these days? He is probably lucky that he does not have more cattle producers in his electorate; they are all canegrowers. If the canegrowers had a chat to the cattle men and women about what he allowed to happen, I think they might start to get the message about what he really thinks about people on the land and his lack of support and commitment to them. The other thing that they never did is stand up and support us when we made the sensible decision to allow that grazing to occur that I mentioned before. These were former cattle properties. These were properties that had seen cattle grazed for over 100 years. Why did they not support that? It was only done for a specified period. When the time came, the cattle were removed. The least that the Australian Labor Party could have done was support people on the land.

In summary, it is like this: this government cares about people on the land. I care about people on the land. We know the people on the land. We will always fight for their interests, even though the seat of government is in the south-east corner of this great state. We will get behind them, we will get behind them during this drought and we will get through this terrible time because we believe in agriculture. It is the key to this state having a bright future.

CHAIR: We have about eight minutes left, member for Mulgrave.

Mr PITT: I refer to SDS pages 16 to 18 with regard to the performance statement. I refer the Premier to page 3 of a scathing Auditor-General's report to parliament which related to the monitoring of performance reporting of the state government. Here the Auditor-General concluded that 72 per cent of the state budget is lacking proper measures of standards of efficiency and effectiveness. On page 2 he stated—

... the widespread lack of service standards and targets for the efficiency of services is of particular concern.

Premier, why have you failed to set appropriate standards and targets for your government according to the independent Auditor-General?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the member for Mulgrave for his question. I am delighted to talk about that if you just give me a moment.

Mr PITT: The briefing was meant to happen a couple of days ago, gentlemen.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, was that a statement?

Mr PITT: Yes, it was a statement, Premier, and—

Mr NEWMAN: I do not see where in the rules of procedure that going outside the rules of procedure or downright bad manners are really catered for.

CHAIR: Premier, are you ready to answer the question?

Mr NEWMAN: Yes, I am ready to answer the question.

Mr PITT: Thank you.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, again, I would love to bring in his voters, sit them down here and let them see the antics that we see from this person who supposedly is their representative, someone who has played games and has done so all day. I am happy to answer the question.

Mr PITT: Answer the question.

CHAIR: Answer the question please, Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: This is my answer to the question. I note the Auditor-General's report. I note the Auditor-General's report has been responded to by government. I understand that a response has already been given. We note that we are well on the way to addressing many of the things that he has said. I can assure honourable members that this government is committed to properly measuring the expenditure of government funds, properly measuring the outcomes that we get and, probably most importantly, telling Queenslanders how we are doing. In contrast, the member for Mulgrave was part of an administration that regularly hid, covered up and obfuscated. That is their track record. I would love to hear him object now because we still have not seen, for example, his leader's diary, even though the commitment was made to publicly release it. I could go on.

I just say that these things are in hand. I am happy to talk about the performance of the government, whether it be in Health, where we have turned around emergency department performance and patient off-stretcher times have dramatically improved. I have talked about the dental waiting lists. We can talk about the crime statistics—all direct measures of the performance of this government. So I—

Mr PITT: Thank you, Premier. Moving on to the director-general—

CHAIR: It is actually time for the break now. We only have a very short time, member for Mulgrave. We are going to break now. The committee will take a break till 3.15 pm.

Proceedings suspended from 2.45 pm to 3.14 pm



CHAIR: The committee will now resume its examination of the portfolio of the Premier including the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Queensland Audit Office and the office of the Queensland Integrity Commissioner. I call the member for Mulgrave.

Mr PITT: My question is to the Premier. I am referring to SDS page 13, DPC monitoring performance and delivery of government policy commitments, but also the budget papers relating to employment forecasts. I refer the Premier to his pre-election promise to lower unemployment to four per cent over six years, noting that there was an unemployment level of 5.5 per cent at the election and now it is 6.3 per cent. The budget papers clearly show a six-year unemployment figure in 2017-18 of 5.25 per cent. Premier, that is a long way from the four per cent promised. Is it possible that Treasury could have gotten it so wrong, or are you not going to reach the commitment that you put forward of the four per cent unemployment figure?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the member for Mulgrave for his question. I think it is a very good question and one that I want to assure him and members of the committee on that I am totally, utterly and unequivocally committed to working every single day in this job to achieve a four per cent target. That is what I am about every single day. I acknowledge some of the background to his question, but I make the point that I stand by the target that I am working with every fibre of my being to achieve, which is a four per cent unemployment target.

In relation to the things that will drive jobs growth and obviously impact on the unemployment rate, let us just examine some of those things about where we are going and the progress that has been made. The Queensland economy is surging forward. There are many, many measures or

metrics indicators that we could look at. Overall state growth is expected to peak at an 11-year high, with growth of six per cent in 2015-16. We will pull ahead of WA as the lead state economy. Very, very clearly we will do that. It is happening right now, and the budget papers reflect that. In trend terms, 62,100 jobs were created in Queensland in the year to June 2014, and I reassure the member that that is a very healthy statistic because it is over half the national employment growth.

In relation to the slight nudging up in most recent figures by I think 0.1 per cent, if I recall correctly, it has been noted that more people are now seeking work in Queensland. The participation rate is going up. I see that as a healthy sign. It adds to the challenges in terms of achieving a target, but again we are committed to doing just that. There are many positives signs though. I have talked a lot today about the four economic pillars. I reflected on some of those areas. Tourism has rebounded. Yes, we have had a more positive Aussie dollar/US dollar exchange rate, but the history of the stats over the last two years would demonstrate very clearly that tourism took off because of the policies of this government to promote the state, to put more money into promoting the state and to organise the industry. Particularly we have seen a huge increase in overseas tourists.

There are now many proposals for significant investment in infrastructure in the tourism sector. If I go down the Queensland coast just very quickly, offhand these are the projects I particularly identify. We start at Port Douglas with the reinvestment in the iconic Port Douglas Mirage resort by a Chinese group out of Nanjing, and they are planning to put hundreds of millions of dollars into upgrading the five-star component of the existing resort, but also building a six-star component within the current golf course and realigning the golf course so it still obviously is a full golf course.

If I then move further south to Cairns, we would all, I would hope, be aware of the \$8 billion Aquis proposal, which is a staggering concept in terms of its audacity and what it would bring to Cairns. Let us hope that it can proceed appropriately through the processes of evaluation and approval and that it can be delivered. I understand as well there are other investments being proposed in Cairns, but I am probably not at liberty to talk about those today.

If I move to the member's own electorate, we have the approval that this government finalised for the Ella Bay resort. I know that the proponents are seeking investment dollars, and I would hope that that would get off the ground.

Moving south to the Whitsundays, again the same Chinese group that have invested in the Port Douglas Mirage have also acquired the Laguna Quays Resort, and they are currently in discussions with the community and government about the upgrade of that resort—again hundreds of millions of dollars—and the issue about whether the Proserpine airport becomes an international airport. They are also investing in a more minor way in Airlie Beach itself, as I recall.

Moving south to Rockhampton, I point to the planned investment of hundreds of millions of dollars by the Iwasaki group in the Iwasaki Yeppoon resort. There is of course the approval again by this government and the relevant federal department of the Great Keppel Island project. They are seeking finance there.

Moving finally to the southern part of the state, we have the Sunshine Coast. Sekisui House are proposing a very significant investment at Coolum Beach near another resort that unfortunately has seen better days, may I say politely.

Finally, of course there is the development just down the road here, the Queens Wharf development, which would see a multi-billion dollar proposal for the successful proponent to redevelop these important blocks in this historic part of the Brisbane CBD. Of course there are also the proposals surrounding the cruise ship terminal on the Gold Coast.

In summary, in one of these pillars there are a lot of construction jobs that are coming and a lot of full-time jobs, particularly for young people in the hospitality industry.

I now turn to mining. I am particularly excited and keen to see the massive Galilee Basin coal projects get going. We know that there are two Indian companies, Adani and GVK Hancock, who are both proposing very significant expenditure and very significant projects. At the moment if I comment on the Adani Carmichael project, which seems to be further progressed in approvals and determination to proceed more quickly—that is my impression—we are talking about 2,500 jobs during construction and 3,900 permanent long-term jobs. The exciting thing, Mr Chairman, is that this is a project that will go for 60 plus years and will generate revenues to this state in terms of royalties and obviously payroll tax, et cetera, and I know will be very important to Townsville, Bowen, Mackay in particular and the hinterland.

If I then turn to construction, the exciting news there is that the most recent Property Council ANZ survey of the property industry shows very healthy sentiment in this state second only to New South Wales, as I recall. I think I made the point earlier on today that there have been about six consecutive reports now, and it has not happened before in that survey where Queensland has been out there by a country mile.

Just in summary, just pulling all this together, we have a situation where the government set a target, and I am totally committed to that because I want Queenslanders to have jobs. Everything that we have done has been about making this into the powerhouse state, and it is working. We are pulling ahead, and at least Queenslanders know where we stand.

Before I conclude, I just have to remind committee members about what the Leader of the Opposition said on ABC Radio on 3 July 2014. This is the contrast and this is the alternative for Queenslanders. There is going to be an election within the next 12 months. You have a four per cent unemployment target commitment from this government that we will strain and strive every single day to achieve jobs growth and a low unemployment rate. In contrast you have the Leader of the Opposition saying this—and this is extraordinary for a Labor leader—'I am not going to guarantee jobs growth.' Well, we are working for a lower unemployment rate and a bright future for all Queenslanders.

Mr PITT: Thank you, Premier. You raised a number of points in there and with time permitting, I would love to retort to some of those points. One in particular, you talked about the participation rate improving; which it went down and it has gone back up, which is welcome. I note, before I ask my next question, that the participation rate in this state—

Mr NEWMAN: I rise to a point of order.

CHAIR: What is your point of order?

Mr PITT: I may be asking a question.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I would ask that you ask the honourable member to refrain from the statements and the speeches, to ask questions, and then we can get on in a timely manner and answer the questions that he is obviously entitled to receive. I am more than happy to answer his questions, but he continues to either interject or make longwinded statements as lead-ins to his questions. This is not a debate; this is an estimates committee. I would ask that he follow the rules, please.

CHAIR: Would you like to ask a question?

Mr PITT: Thank you, Mr Chair. I am pleased that the Premier can educate us all on how estimates are meant to work.

Premier, you referred before the election to a figure of 420,000 jobs that would be required to be created to reach a four per cent unemployment target. Will you reveal today how many jobs need to be created as of today's date to reach that unemployment target of four per cent, given that we have an unemployment rate above six per cent in Queensland? In fact it is 6.3 per cent, as I mentioned earlier, which is higher than it was during the global financial crisis.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I would question where that is indeed in the SDS, and again I point out that you have me firmly committing to a four per cent unemployment target; you have—

Mr PITT: It is a specific question.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier.

Mr NEWMAN:—me committing firmly to a four per cent unemployment target; you have the Leader of the Opposition, I assume strongly supported by her shadow Treasurer and the Labor Party caucus, saying 'I am not going to guarantee jobs'—

Mr PITT: Mr Chair, I asked the Premier a specific question. If you are going to rule on relevance, I would ask that you rule on relevance. I have asked a question that relates directly to the unemployment level in this state, the potential figure of numbers of jobs to be created, and the Premier is trying to argue whether this is a relevant question at an estimates hearing. Can you please rule on relevance?

CHAIR: I am listening to the Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I am sorry, I will have to do this again. Section 115 of the standing orders states—

- (c) Questions shall not ask for:
 - (i) an expression of opinion;

Essentially those are matters of opinion. There are multi factors involved. I have told the honourable member what our target is. I have then, much to his apparent displeasure, reminded him that the Australian Labor Party not only won't commit to a target, but won't commit to any sort of guarantee to try and pursue jobs growth in this state. That is the difference between the two political parties. That is my answer.

CHAIR: Thank you. The Premier has answered the question.

Mr PITT: Has he, Mr Chair? I asked him a specific question. With respect, he said that it is with regards to an opinion. I am not asking his opinion. I am asking how many jobs would need to be created to meet his unemployment target, which he has just spent nearly 10 minutes talking about, which he then says is not a relevant question. I think this is an important question that needs to be answered.

CHAIR: Sure, but the Premier has said that is his answer to the question. He says that is his answer to the question.

Mr NEWMAN: I am happy to have another go, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR: Do you want to answer the question?

Mr NEWMAN: I am answering the question. I am happy to just reiterate my answer.

CHAIR: Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: It is like this. On the one hand you have a strong LNP team with a strong plan—a four per cent unemployment target—

Mr PITT: Premier, if you are unable to come up with a figure like you did prior to the election, which was a figure of 420,000, will you take on notice this question to come up with what a figure might look like? Under any modelling you have done—clearly, you must have done modelling, looking at your four per cent in the first place, to come up with 420,000 jobs—I am interested to find out what today's figure would look like, how many jobs would need to be created. This is not a matter of policy; this is a matter of facts. Treasury or your own department could do that work for you if you are unable to do it today.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: I will go back to answering the question. I know that he does not like me answering the question because he does not like to see how little policy substance there is in the Australian Labor Party today. On the one hand you have a strong team with a strong plan to take this state forward. Our target is four per cent. On the other hand you have the same group of people being brought back together who destroyed this state's economy, crushed our public sector finances and blew the debt to \$80 billion—and it would have been \$85 billion. And their leader says, 'I'm not going to guarantee jobs growth.' Mr Chairman, that is my answer.

Mr PITT: And you are not going to commit to a number.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. Member for Sunnybank?

Mr STEWART: I refer to page 5 of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's SDS regarding revitalisation of front-line services. I ask: how has the government improved management preparedness and responsiveness to biosecurity issues in Queensland?

Mr NEWMAN: As I have been saying all day, the government has a strong plan for a bright future for this state, and revitalising front-line services is an essential part of the government's strong plan. It was one of five pledges that we made to the people of Queensland at the 2012 election. We are about putting agriculture as one of the four pillars of the Queensland economy and Queensland's producers—our farmers, our fishers and our foresters—at the centre of everything we do. That is why we are delivering on our commitment to providing innovative, high-performance and customer focused biosecurity services.

We are of course righting Labor's failures—and they are very significant failures. We are righting the failures of the current Labor members, who are just not interested at all in agriculture, producers or biosecurity. We are righting the failures of the member for Mackay and the former Labor

government, who consistently ignored warnings from the Auditor-General that biosecurity legislation was out of date and conflicting and left Queensland ill-equipped to respond to pest and disease outbreaks. We have delivered a new Biosecurity Act, achieved a reduction of around 150 pages of legislation and replaced six acts. We are righting years of ineffective planning and delivering the biosecurity measures that Queensland producers depend on to deliver for their communities and for the Queensland economy.

This year we have allocated \$1.5 million to producers impacted by the bovine Johne's disease outbreak. We will extend the BJD Assistance Scheme in recognition that some producers are still under quarantine. We are exploring options for a voluntary industry levy that will fund an ongoing Queensland cattle biosecurity fund. Hendra virus, fire ants, rabbits, wild dogs, fruit flies, red witchweed: we understand these threats because our members are on the ground in the affected regions in their own electorates listening, surveying and experiencing the threat to our producers and witnessing the great work our biosecurity officers do to protect Queensland industries.

Our clean, green status is vital to our export industries. Again reflecting on my grain industry time, I cannot stress enough how important this is for the government, important to Minister John McVeigh and important to yours truly in a very personal way. Our producers benefit enormously from our disease-free status across all facets of agriculture and horticulture. It is a vital market advantage. Our strategy to double agricultural production by 2040 depends on this disease-free status. For this and for Queensland we are delivering for biosecurity and we are delivering for producers.

Our commitment to biosecurity, as I said at the beginning, is all part of our plan to supercharge rural and regional economies by doubling Queensland agricultural production by 2040 as part of our strong plan for a bright future. Again, it contrasts with the ineptitude of the former Labor government.

Dr FLEGG: Premier, I refer to page 6 of the DPC SDS regarding sustainable management of Queensland's unique ecosystem. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park has always been a multiuse marine park. Will you commit to maintaining its multiuse status so tourists, fishers and environmentalists can all reap the benefits of this unique resource?

Mr NEWMAN: This government has a strong plan for a bright future for Queensland. Everything we do is about two things: supercharging the economy and providing the best front-line services for Queenslanders. Growing a four-pillar economy is part of our strong plan for that brighter future. It is one of the five pledges we made to the people of Queensland in the 2012 election. The strategy focuses on construction as well as tourism, resources and agriculture—the four pillars of growth.

The Great Barrier Reef is just one of the many fantastic tourism destinations that this state has to offer. We in this government recognise that Queensland's coastal reef destinations rely heavily on the Great Barrier Reef in motivating visitation to the regions. That is why I welcome the question. I am glad to be able to speak to the health of the Great Barrier Reef, because there has been a lot of misinformation circulating about the reef over recent months. The reality is that the reef continues to be one of the world's best managed marine protected areas. I will say that again: the reality is, contrary to the spin from certain groups, that the reef continues to be one of the world's best managed marine protected areas.

The reef and its catchments are multiple-use areas on and within which Queenslanders enjoy a wide range of land and marine based activities. This government remains committed to ensuring this multiple use and to maintaining the Great Barrier Reef's unique marine ecosystem. We also remain fully committed to cooperative joint management with the Australian government.

In relation to threats, the most significant and important point I can make today on this issue is that the science says that the major threat to the reef arises from, firstly, weather events—so cyclones like Yasi—and crown-of-thorns starfish infestations and coral-bleaching events. In 2013 Queensland renewed its commitment to the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, which obviously is focusing on things that we can control: water quality which is due to run-off from what is going on along that coastal strip in those catchments along the Queensland coast. That is what we should be going after, because higher levels of nutrient ending up in the offshore waters is the thing that feeds crown-of-thorns infestations. So the key to protecting the reef—we cannot stop cyclones—is to deal with what is going on on the land. That is exactly what we are doing.

The 2014-15 budget—this budget from this government—continues its support for best management practice in the reef catchments through an additional \$55 million over five years. It reinforces our commitment to partner with industry and landholders to improve reef water quality. The

most recent reef report card—the one that just came out—shows that we are on the right track. This is a credit to the graziers and the cane farmers who have changed and continue to change land management practices.

I just stop for a second and say this: the former government I think failed in this important area because what they tried to do was regulate the necessary changes. There is always a need for some regulation, but this government's approach is about sharing with people on the land and the major organisations that represent them the science and top-quality research, encouraging people and facilitating them to change their practices.

A couple of months ago I was very pleased to be a guest of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation in Far North Queensland. Over a couple of days I received a number of presentations about the work that they are doing, that they are funding, that they are pulling together, which is then providing information to people on the land and managers about how these issues are being dealt with.

Members may not know, but you can now go to the BoM website and find data that is updated daily, as I recall, from satellite passes on what is going on in offshore water quality. The satellites that go over Queensland have these incredible sensors that are measuring the chlorophyll in those offshore waters. Chlorophyll levels are a proxy for nutrient levels. So with a great deal of precision—more than we have ever had before—we can now measure on a daily basis what is going on. So if we have a large rainfall event or a cyclonic event we can see what is coming down those rivers and we can see the plumes offshore. That is a quite fascinating thing.

I just want to explain that a bit because after the recent tropical cyclone—the one we had in April—I did have cause to travel from Cairns to Cooktown in a helicopter up the coast. There was a very impressive sediment plume off the Daintree River. I was quite taken aback by that, because this is a fairly pristine catchment. You would think that a catchment that had mostly Wet Tropics forest in a World Heritage area would not show that type of sediment. I was quite taken aback by that and I thought, 'What is going on here?' Some time later, at the Great Barrier Reef Foundation's conference, I saw data they presented about what had happened post that event. It is quite interesting. While what was actually coming down that river looked to the naked eye to be quite muddy, if I can put it that way, the actual impact, as I understood it from those scientists and researchers, was far less than what was going on much further south, say in other developed catchments. In other words—and this is the point I am making about the work that we are funding—you cannot trust the naked eye. You have to look at what the sensors are showing in these satellites to see these chlorophyll levels, which actually represent what is really going on in terms of nutrients.

So the point I am making, pulling all of this together, is that we now have science. We have information that we are sharing with farmers. The farmers love the reef. I am sure the member for Mulgrave would acknowledge that at least—that his constituents who grow cane love to go out and fish on the reef. They want to protect it as well. When presented by people in government and our supporting partners with what is going on, they want to change their practices. They see that they must for their children and their grandchildren, and that is the way to take this forward. So we are on the right track.

By the way, before I move off this issue, we will work with the tourism industry to continue to promote the reef and positively so because it is a world-class tourism destination for both domestic and international markets. And we want everyone who wants to take the opportunity to come and see the Great Barrier Reef to do so. It is a long-term asset for Queensland. It is here forever, and we intend to protect it.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. I call the member for Murrumba.

Mr GULLEY: My question is to the Premier and I refer to page 6 of the DPC SDS regarding the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. I would like to note that Mr Steve Armitage, Principal Commissioner of the Queensland Family and Child Commission, was asked a question earlier. So, Premier, you may wish to expand on that previous response. Premier, how will the government's response to the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry ensure that Queensland continues on its way to being the safest state in which to live and raise a child?

Mr NEWMAN: One thing that is critically important to me as a parent and a father of two daughters—and I referred to them earlier on today—is protecting kids. When I was Leader of the Opposition, I made, on behalf of the team, some commitments about child protection. We said we would have an inquiry into these matters and we have done so. We did have a child protection system that was overburdened and unsustainable. That was clearly the case. So we committed to an

inquiry, and on 1 July 2012 we did establish the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry, led by Tim Carmody, who is now the Chief Justice of this state. We tasked Mr Carmody, or Chief Justice Carmody as he is now, with looking at the entire child protection system. My understanding is that that actually had not been done before. I will stand to be corrected but that is the advice I have. The commission of inquiry was asked to deliver a roadmap for the child protection system for the next decade, and that is what it produced, and its final report *Taking responsibility: a roadmap for Queensland child protection* has been delivered.

The commission identified that even though the child protection budget has more than tripled, from around \$182 million in 2003-04 to \$773 million in 2012-13, the system was not ensuring the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children as well as it should or could have. As I said, we are committed to making this the safest state in which to raise a family, to raise one's children, which is why we carefully considered all of the commission's recommendations before making the decision to accept all 121, including six which have been accepted in principle.

Not only have we accepted all 121 recommendations, but we recently announced funding of \$406 million—\$406 million—over five years for the implementation of the government's response to these recommendations, and work on implementation has well and truly begun. It was made very clear by the commission that parents and families are best placed to take care of their children and that government should only intervene as a last resort to ensure the safety of children who are at significant risk of harm. By implementing the government's response, a much greater emphasis is going to be placed on providing families with adequate support so that they can take care of their children at home. The 10-year reform roadmap will ensure that families are receiving adequate support and that early intervention services are provided where needed.

Key reforms to be implemented in this financial year—so 2014-15—include: establishing community based intake and referral services, developing a collaborative case management approach for the most at-risk families, and improving services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to reduce rapidly increasing disproportionate representation in the child protection system. So they are the things we are doing. This government, I stress, has no intention of changing things merely for the sake of change. We are determined to do what others before us could not do, and that is to deliver a reformed child protection system in this state that better provides for the safety, wellbeing and best interests for our most at-risk children when they cannot be cared for at home.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. I call the member for Mulgrave.

Mr PITT: My question is to the director-general, again referencing the performance statement on pages 16 to 18 of the SDS and linking that through to the Auditor-General report No. 18 I mentioned earlier. It is outlined on page 54 of the Auditor-General's report, that measures that, to quote the Auditor-General, obscure assessment of the department's performance appear to have been implemented. The Auditor-General has found that as far as the DPC is concerned there are 'no direct measures of outcome efficiency or cost effectiveness measures'. My question is: what steps have you, Director-General, taken to implement the recommendations in this report? Will you guarantee that future budgets and service delivery statements will include performance measures that meet proper standards to allow the public, the media and the opposition to scrutinise government performance?

Mr Grayson: Yes. The Auditor-General's report I think is welcome. It is an important input to improving the service standards that we publish in the SDS. In terms of the report that the member is referring to, I have replied to the Auditor-General. It was quite a lengthy reply, and I believe that that reply, which was put together in consultation with our colleagues in Queensland Treasury and Trade, was tabled along with the Auditor-General's report. I understand that the Auditor-General's report and the response to it will now be considered by the Finance and Administration Committee and that there will be an inquiry conducted into it. So we are looking forward to the outcomes of the committee's inquiry. We will continue to work with the Auditor-General to ensure we are always producing relevant outcomes based, not processed based, performance standards.

Mr PITT: My second question relates to the 1 William Street development, and it is to the Premier. Premier, this relates to the Auditor-General's report No. 12 regarding 1 William Street, and this comes under the area of ensuring executive support for parliament, cabinet and government decision processes in the SDS on page 8. The Auditor-General's report talks about the seven buildings that were sold in the CBD as 'a risk to the operating sustainability' of the state's finances. Through the examination of the project, we know there is going to be \$2.6 billion expended over the

next 10 to 15 years on a new Executive Building that taxpayers will not own at the end of the day. Premier, will you explain why there appears to be no business case or cost-benefit analysis developed for this project and how do you justify this as being good value for public money?

Mr NEWMAN: I note a few things in the question. That is usual or typical of the way the shadow Treasurer plays the game. It is like saying someone is going to rent a house for 20 years or 30 years and it is going to cost I do not know how many thousands of dollars—shock horror. There are many people renting homes right now and they do not sit down and tote up what it is going to cost them for the next 20 or 30 years in the rental market.

I make the point as well that Cbus are providing the funding for this project. Before I move on, like any commercial tenant in this city—whether it be a PricewaterhouseCoopers accounting firm or a BHP Billiton—they have commercial premises which they rent from people who are specialist investors and developers of property. There is nothing unusual here. So Cbus, which is an industry superannuation fund which is going to be provide the benefits to many hardworking men and women in the construction sector—it has a whole lot of union and indeed a few Labor aligned people on its board—is putting up the money. But after 99 years—I think it is a 99-year lease, as I recall; I will stand to be corrected—they cannot jack up the building and take it away. The lease is over. The land comes back to the state of Queensland and its people. So I just reflect on the opening part of the question and it is just ludicrous, as is the Labor Party's continued prosecution of this issue over the past two years.

I just make the point that this is saving a lot of money. It potentially will save at least \$60 million a year, and that is just on a rental basis, not including outgoings. It provides for the redevelopment of this important part of the Brisbane CBD. The Queen's Wharf development would not be possible without the ability to then move out of the Executive Building and the Public Works building and reclaim those sites.

To the public servants who are listening, to the public servants who might be watching, I just say this: you deserve to work in proper modern office accommodation. You deserve to, just like other people in the private sector. I am not talking about flash, expensive, overcapitalised stuff. I am talking about modern, airy, spacious, open plan office accommodation where people can collaborate, where people can interact, where people can get out of the quite frankly rundown, aged, decrepit buildings with the threadbare carpets and the dingy corridors, the poor lighting, the poor and cantankerous air-conditioning systems, the closed offices and the rooms of secrets. It actually sounds like a Labor Party reunion headquarters, doesn't it? That would suit the mentality of the Labor Party.

But I say to the public servants in the room: this is about you. It is about your teams. It is about public servants who might be watching on the internet. It is about the families of public servants. We want to change the culture of the Queensland government. We want people to serve. We want people to love coming to work. Most of all, this project is about changing this whole paradigm of office accommodation for the better.

In summary, it saves money. It allows the revitalisation of the Brisbane CBD in this part of the CBD. It is going to do great things for the way that we want the Public Service to operate in the future and, contrary to the ridiculous assertions at the beginning of the question, this land will continue to be owned by the people of Queensland and, if they cannot work out how to jack it up and take it away, I guess the building reverts to the state of Queensland after 99 years or if some other arrangement is made.

Mr PITT: Mr Chair, before I move to my final question of this section, I did not hear the Premier mention or address cost benefit analysis once in his answer. Is there an answer to the question forthcoming before I move on?

Mr NEWMAN: That is my answer.

CHAIR: The Premier has given his answer. Next question.

Mr NEWMAN: Lots of benefits.

Mr PITT: Thank you, Premier. I move on to another matter that came before the Finance and Administration Committee in March of this year. It was an oversight hearing of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. I asked Mr Musgrove a question during that hearing about community cabinets. I asked Mr Musgrove who made the decision to stop the public forums that were occurring previously under community cabinets right around our state. Community cabinets are a very important public forum and a good chance for a government to hear firsthand from Queenslanders face to face what they feel about them. Mr Musgrove was not able to answer that question. We took that on notice and

the director-general, Mr Grayson, replied and said, 'In relation to the committee's question around community cabinet meetings, I can confirm that the Premier determines how, when and where community cabinet meetings are held.' That no doubt includes the format. My question to you, Premier, is why, notwithstanding that there are still private, prebooked meetings, have you got rid of the public forums which were such an important part of public engagement in this state in an open and fair democracy?

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I have been asked this question on a number of occasions in the past two years and we are going over the same old ground. I simply say again, contrary to the assertion in the question, anybody can come and meet with a member of the Queensland cabinet and assistant ministers at those forums. Anybody can make an appointment. They are conducted around the state regularly into all sorts of different locations—

Mr PITT: Premier, why won't you take questions from the members of the public?

CHAIR: The Premier is answering the question.

Mr NEWMAN: If I can conclude my question, anybody can come along and make a meeting with any member of the government and deal with the issues of their concern.

Mr PITT: What if an appointment is not granted to them, Premier?

Mr GULLEY: My question is to the Premier. I refer to page 2 of the DPC SDS in regard to the Queensland Family and Child Commission. Premier, what is the role of the newly established Queensland Family and Child Commission in responding to the recommendations of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry?

Mr NEWMAN: This government is committed to ensuring that Queensland is the safest state in the nation to live and raise a child. Soon after the March 2012 election we established the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry to review the entire child protection system. I have spoken about that. Again, there was an overburdened and unsustainable system left to us by the previous Labor government—a system that was not providing for the safety, wellbeing and best interests of our most at-risk children as well as it could or should have. The Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry made 121 recommendations as part of a reform road map for the next decade. All of those recommendations have been accepted including six that have been accepted in principle.

One of those recommendations was to establish an advisory council to support the development of collaborative partnerships across government and non-government service sectors and regularly monitor the effectiveness and practical value of these partnerships. The Queensland Family and Child Commission was established on 1 July just past and will provide independent advice on the effectiveness of the child protection reforms to help make Queensland the safest place in this nation to raise a child. It is also going to promote and advocate the role of the family and communities to protect and care for Queensland's children and young people so that more children can stay at home safely.

The commission will provide public education, clear messages that everyone must take responsibility for child protection, acknowledge skills and capabilities of non-government organisations and workforces, provide expert advice on child protection, coordinate efforts and strengthen sector capacity across government and non-government agencies, oversee and report on Queensland's progress in implementing the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, and report annually on the performance of child protection systems and progress on the reform road map.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission will play, I believe, a key role in the ongoing implementation of the reform road map. This government has a strong plan for a bright future for Queensland and all its children, and we are determined to deliver a reformed child protection system in Queensland that better provides for the safety, wellbeing and best interests of our most at-risk children when they cannot be cared for at home.

Mrs OSTAPOVITCH: I have a question for the Premier. I refer to page 6 of the DPC SDS re client focused human services. How is the government's focus on front-line health services and record Health budget improving front-line dental services?

Mr NEWMAN: Two years ago our hospitals were a mess. They were a mess. Two years ago we had the fake Tahitian prince with \$16 million stolen from under the nose of the former government. We had queues of ambulances outside our hospitals and a \$1.2 billion Health payroll debacle which meant that hardworking nurses and doctors were not getting paid correctly or at all in some cases.

But the Leader of the Opposition did not want an inquiry into that. The former Labor Premier, Anna Bligh, told us that Queensland Health was dysfunctional and she was going to tear it in half. In fact, she said Queenslanders could 'no longer tolerate the sick administrative performance of this mammoth organisation'. The opposition members were talking amongst themselves. I had better read the quote from their former leader again. Anna Bligh said Queenslanders could 'no longer tolerate the sick administrative performance of this mammoth organisation'. Premier Bligh also said 'it is time to start again' and 'we have done everything possible to turn this ship around'.

There is also a very illuminating interview that was on radio station 4BC on or around 8 October 2008, and it involved Michael P Smith as the interviewer and the then minister for health, Stephen Robertson. For the benefit of all members of the committee, I am happy to provide the audio. We can e-mail that interview out if it is the wish of the committee. We could also provide a transcript of that interview in relation to matters to do with the performance of the hospital system and the health system at the time. It goes for about 13 minutes, but it is something that I would encourage any journalist who is covering today's proceedings or, indeed, any observer from the public to look at because what it particularly demonstrates is the attitude at the highest echelons of the then Queensland government in relation to health. You had a minister who clearly was not across the brief. You had a minister who was doing everything to duck the fact that there were problems in the system. You had a minister who, when asked about a particular issue where an ambulance went to the Mater Private, I think with a child, and there was then a long delay, said, 'That is not our problem because the Mater Private is not part of the public hospital system.' The problem was that the ambulance, operated by the QAS, took the child to the hospital because they could not get into a public hospital, but the minister then said that the Ambulance Service had nothing to do with him. As Mr Smith said that day—and it is in the transcript—'You are a member of the cabinet. Why are you not taking responsibility for the failure of ambulances as well?' I see the Leader of the Opposition seems to be a bit concerned about me raising these things.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am talking about relevance. You will not answer any of my questions but you are prepared to talk about the past. We want you to talk about the present. You will not talk about the present.

CHAIR: Premier, we cannot take audio but we are more than happy if you want to table the transcript.

Mr NEWMAN: Surely, Mr Chairman, we could e-mail the audio to the committee and that could then be e-mailed out.

CHAIR: No, you cannot table audio apparently.

Mr NEWMAN: I see. Clearly there is a need for us to modernise our processes in the parliament as well. I shall see the Clerk about these matters. I think that is a very important thing because the tone of the interview is not reflected in this transcript. Clearly the flavour of it comes through to a certain extent. I suppose it is covered in this transcript that the then minister hangs up.

CHAIR: Are you going to table that transcript?

Mr NEWMAN: I will. I do not know if I have another copy. I might need it. I am happy to table it. That is what was going on back then. We promised we would fix the health system and go about fixing it we have.

To go back to the question, the number of Queenslanders waiting two years or more for general dental care was 62,513 in February 2013 and it is zero as at 30 June 2014 so a complete reduction—100 per cent. The number of people waiting for a check-up has reduced from 112,204 to 71,034—a 37 per cent reduction. Clearly, I would like and the minister would like to make further inroads into those figures.

These great results show that we are fixing the health system, we are providing better support for our health workers, better care to patients, better value for money, improving the service and putting more money into the system, and Queensland families are getting better health outcomes as a result. It is a better quality health system today than it was 2½ years ago. There is still work to be done and we will continue to put our shoulder to the wheel on that one because we have a strong plan for a bright future for this state.

Mrs OSTAPOVITCH: Premier, I have a follow-on from my previous question on page 6 of the DPC SDS on client focused human services. Similar to improving front-line dental services, could you elaborate on how the record Health budget is improving front-line emergency department services?

Mr NEWMAN: I am delighted to answer that question, but before I do that I have been reflecting on the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition. A bit of a game is being played here today by the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I take offence to that and I ask that he withdraw.

CHAIR: She has taken offence, Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is a personal reflection. I take offence.

Mr NEWMAN: I do not know if it is a personal reflection. I am saying that a game is being played.

CHAIR: You need to withdraw, Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: I withdraw, Mr Chairman. I am saying the Leader of the Opposition knows full well there are clear rules and protocols around these estimates. I am now going to put on the table what I think is going on today. I think the Leader of the Opposition, knowing full well the rules, is deliberately coming in here with questions that are outside the rules so shock, horror a claim can be made that the government will not answer questions.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I find offence at that, Chair, and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr NEWMAN: That is not a personal reflection.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I find personal offence at that and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr NEWMAN: That is not a personal reflection.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is.

Mr NEWMAN: That is not a personal reflection.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have taken offence.

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, that is not a personal reflection.

CHAIR: She has taken offence, Premier, so she is asking you to withdraw.

Mr NEWMAN: Well, I would request an adjournment so I can consult with the Clerk, please.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You cannot do that. The standing orders are very clear.

Mr NEWMAN: I would like to request an adjournment so I can consult with the Clerk.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You are taking up the time because you do not want to answer the questions. These are stalling tactics so you do not want to answer the questions.

CHAIR: If the Premier has asked for an adjournment—

Mr NEWMAN: If the committee wishes to move on, I am in their hands. But I just simply say—

CHAIR: Well, the request was made—

Mr NEWMAN: Again, I will just make the point: there are standing orders that govern the way these estimates committee hearings are conducted. I consulted personally with the Clerk this morning—the boss of your officer who has been talking to you on occasions throughout these proceedings. I consulted with the Clerk—

Mr PITT: Are you questioning the chair?

CHAIR: No. Premier, there was offence taken and it would just be helpful if you would just—

Mr NEWMAN: But I am talking about something else, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR: The first issue is the offence that was taken.

Mr NEWMAN: Okay. I withdraw.

CHAIR: Withdrawn, thank you.

Mr NEWMAN: Done. Mr Chairman, again, I just want to reiterate that I spoke to the Clerk of the Parliament this morning and I said, 'There are the standing orders. I want to get very clear what the rules are for these estimates hearings,' because in previous years the Leader of the Opposition has sought to disregard the rules and I wanted to get very clear in my mind the way that these hearings were to be conducted. I received advice from the Clerk and that is why I am concerned that the Leader of the Opposition would make an interjection before, saying that I—and indeed I understand it has happened in other committees today—am refusing to answer questions. That is not the case.

There are many forums for asking questions. The questions though in these estimates committees must be about the actual SDS and follow the standing orders of the parliament, and that is the point I am making. I would hate for anybody who was a casual observer and not across the procedures of the parliament to be misled.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: I would now like to answer the question for the honourable member.

Mr PITT: Have you finished giving advice to the chair?

CHAIR: He did not give me advice. Is that a reflection on the chair?

Mr PITT: No. It is not a reflection on the chair; it is a reflection on the person appearing before the committee.

CHAIR: The Premier was making a statement. As I said, the original issue was regarding him withdrawing a comment. He has withdrawn the comment, and now, Premier, I have asked you to answer the question.

Mr NEWMAN: So going back to emergency department performance, again, the Stephen Robertson interview speaks volumes about the former government's attitude. For 13 minutes, Stephen Robertson twisted and turned and obfuscated and would not take responsibility for the poor performance of emergency departments and ambulances and also the whole performance of Queensland Health. That is a matter that I now do table.

CHAIR: Do you seek leave, Premier?

Mr NEWMAN: I seek leave to table it.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the committee. So we want families, individuals, people's kids to be able to get into a hospital and get fixed quickly, get seen quickly and get their injuries attended to and their illnesses dealt with. We want the best possible outcomes when people are hurt or sick. For parents in particular, obviously that is critically important.

The question was specifically about emergency departments. I make the point that waiting times in emergency departments are shorter than ever before. In 2013-14, the median waiting time to treatment was 19 minutes as per the Service Delivery Statement. As at March 2012, the median waiting time was 20 minutes. Queenslanders are spending less time in an ED. As at March 2014, 78 per cent of patients left the ED within four hours of arrival. These improvements have occurred despite a significant growth in the number of Queenslanders using emergency departments. That is a critical point.

I am advised that no facilities have initiated ambulance bypass since January 2013. We are committed to achieving the Commonwealth government's National Emergency Access Target. The latest nationally comparative data regarding NEAT shows that Queensland's result in 2013 was ranked second and above the national average. These great results show we are fixing the health system, providing better support for our health workers, providing better care to patients, providing better value for money, improving service and putting more money into the system. Queensland families, as a result, are getting better health outcomes. It is all part of our strong plan for a brighter future for this state.

CHAIR: The member for Gladstone has a question.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: My next two questions are to the Auditor. We have heard from the Premier on a number of occasions in relation to difficulties in the past with fraud, particularly in the health department. I wonder if you could clarify what new initiatives are being undertaken to address those issues and the sort of capital that is being used to achieve those results.

Mr Greaves: Could I just clarify—do you mean the initiatives that my office has undertaken to help reduce fraud in the health department?

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Or in government generally.

Mr Greaves: Thanks very much for the question. This issue goes to the role of an Auditor-General. I guess responding to that I should contextualise it, as auditors are wont to do, by saying that it is primarily management's responsibility to identify fraud or to prevent fraud from occurring in the first place. Having said that though, there is obviously a legitimate role for an Auditor-General. Through my financial audit mandate, I am charged with the responsibility of making sure that the financial statements are free from material error and fraud. So as a part of my financial

audit, we routinely assess the internal control systems of the government agencies that we audit, and our assessment of internal control includes an assessment of whether or not they have appropriate controls to prevent fraud or to detect fraud and investigate it should it occur. That is a part of my financial audit program, and as you will see in my budget we spend about \$31 million a year on that—I will just make sure that is the right figure. Not all of that expenditure of course goes to the identification or prevention of fraud. Most of it is directed towards forming an opinion on the financial statements.

The capital that we invest then is a part of the investment we include in our financial audit. What we do specifically is, in the financial audit context, if we identify areas of weakness of internal control which could lead to fraud or allow fraud to occur and go undetected, we raise those issues with the management of those organisations, who as I have said before are primarily responsible for managing their fraud risk.

In context of reporting to the parliament on the results of that review, you will note that each year I table a report in the parliament on the results of our internal control reviews. I most recently tabled a report last Friday which summarised the results of our reviews of internal control systems for the previous financial year just gone. I was pleased to note in that report in fact that the overall number of control issues that we identified have reduced since we last looked at this 12 months ago. I was pleased because what that means is that the internal control systems are maturing in the government organisations that we audit. We take from that indicator that they are strengthening, which does not eliminate the risk of fraud but certainly reduces or goes towards reducing the risk of fraud.

The other capital, if you like, that I invest in the specific area of fraud comes through my performance audit program. You will note in my strategic audit plan that I published on my website on 30 June last that we have identified a specific performance audit this year in the context of local government. So we are just about to undertake an in-depth performance audit of fraud risk management in local government, and that audit is just about to get underway.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Thank you. I have a question in relation to the policy development fund. There are significant funds to be allocated to the two major parties. Has the Audit Office been involved in developing an appropriate acquittal program for those funds? Would you comment on that appropriate process?

Mr Greaves: To answer the question directly, no, we have not been involved at this stage in development of an acquittal process. I would simply observe that they are public moneys and under the Audit Act I have the power to follow public moneys if I so desire. So it is within my mandate should I so desire to actually undertake an audit of the use of those moneys. I have not got that in my plan; it is not currently on my program. I would be happy to be engaged in any consultation on development of a governance or an oversight or an acquittal process around those funds.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: It would not be in your plan simply because at the time of drawing up the plan it was not on the horizon, not publicly any way. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you. I now call the member for Inala.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have a question to the director-general about contestability, which is on page 13 of the SDS. Director-General, what work has been done on identifying opportunities for contestability across the Public Service?

Mr Grayson: Mr Chairman, that is a very broad question. Maybe if I start with the way that we look at the issue of contestability across government. One of the catalysts for us moving down the contestability path was the Commission of Audit, which found that government could be more effective in undertaking its role as a policy setter and a regulator if it moved from being a doer to an enabler—so instead of undertaking services in-house or providing those services directly, that it moved to facilitating those outcomes through partnerships with the NGO sector, with the private sector. So what we have done within DPC—and I am very proud of the lead role that DPC takes in the broader reform process, but in this contestability process in particular—is that we have a renewal unit within DPC that supports the Public Sector Renewal Board, which provides guidance, support and advice to all agencies about how they can undertake their roles more effectively. The starting point for that is always who is the customer and what are the objectives that we are trying to achieve. If we start at that point, then there are a range of mechanisms that we could look at in order to achieve those outcomes. Contestability goes to creating an environment where, on an ongoing basis, there is competitive pressure for continual improvement in service delivery.

Mr NEWMAN: May I add something, Mr Chairman.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, I am not asking you. I am asking the director-general.

Mr NEWMAN: Well, I—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am allowed to ask the questions to who I want. I have a question for the Premier in a minute.

Mr NEWMAN: I was going to add something on contestability. It might have helped the Leader of the Opposition, but fine.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, I get to ask the questions.

CHAIR: Premier, we will just leave it.

Mr NEWMAN: Fine. I am making the offer in the spirit of openness and accountability.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We will come to that in a moment. Director-General, is there a dollar value at the moment about the planned contestability that has been identified so far, like the amount of—

CHAIR: Of what aspect?

Ms PALASZCZUK: In terms of per department. Have you come to a rough dollar figure about how much work is planned to actually be put out to privatisation?

Mr Grayson: Mr Chairman—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy for you to take it on notice if you want.

Mr NEWMAN: Just hang on, I thought we were talking about contestability. Suddenly the word 'privatisation' crept in. I just noted that. I have to point it out. Mr Grayson might have missed it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Contestability. We can use that term, contestability.

Mr NEWMAN: Perhaps the question should be repeated for the director-general, Mr Chairman.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am sorry. I am asking the questions.

CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Grayson, are you comfortable with the question?

Mr Grayson: No, I would like the question repeated. Sorry, I should have listened more intently.

Ms PALASZCZUK: What is the value of planned contestability that has been identified so far by department?

Mr Grayson: Mr Chairman—

CHAIR: It is a bit vague. Are you talking about savings or are you talking about how much?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think it is pretty clear. I am happy for you to take it on notice. I can write it down. I think it is very clear. Perhaps I will ask another question, Director-General. How many Public Service jobs are likely to be affected by the program of contestability?

CHAIR: Again, that is—

Ms PALASZCZUK: You have a renewal team there. Surely they have some idea. What are they doing otherwise? If they do not know what parts of the departments they are looking at being contestable and they do not know how many jobs are going to be shed, what is the role?

CHAIR: Again, Mr Grayson, I am happy for you to answer whatever you can, but it seems to be quite hypothetical.

Mr Grayson: Maybe it might be helpful for the member if I just reiterate that the contestability process that we go through is about how do we achieve better service delivery, how do we get more effective service delivery? So no, there is not—

Mr NEWMAN: What about the Government Air Wing?

Mr Grayson: That is a good point.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So there are no planned Public Service job losses as part of contestability?

CHAIR: Just allow Mr Grayson to answer the question.

Mr Grayson: Thank you, Mr Chairman. The starting point is how can we deliver services more effectively? In some cases it results in those services being delivered by the non-government sector. But in other cases and having been through the process, we do have examples where we have said,

‘Actually, the service is better remaining in-house.’ A good example of that would be the Government Air Wing. There were changes in the way that the Government Air Wing operates, but it remains in-house. It is no longer with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet; it is with the Public Safety Business Agency, where it is able to get some efficiencies by operating together with other air wings—the old Police Service Air Wing, for example, and the emergency services helicopters.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Grayson. I actually have a question. I refer to page 6 of the DPC SDS. This one is actually quite personal. I have been dealing with a gentleman who just received a cochlear implant after 30 years. He is a 72-year-old gentleman who lost his hearing due to industrial deafness while working in the forces. How is the government’s focus on front-line health services and record Health budget improving front-line services for people receiving cochlear implants?

Mr NEWMAN: This government does have a strong plan for a bright future for Queensland and part of that plan is revitalising front-line services. That means, as one of the most important responsibilities of this government, an increased focus on the important area of Health. We have got a very capable health minister, who is working through all the issues that Labor neglected in our Health system and addressing them systematically one at a time, one after another. There could not be a more dramatic contrast between the performance of Lawrence Springborg and the matter I was referring to a few minutes ago with Stephen Robertson. It is chalk and cheese.

In the last couple of days there has been an issue about the reading of X-ray films. The minister and the health board have taken responsibility and have been up-front with people addressing the issue. That is just an example. We are about putting Queenslanders, the customers, first at the centre of everything we do in Health. At the end of the day Health is not about doctors, nurses and support workers; it is actually about the patients. Those great people I just mentioned deliver the service, but the patient comes first. We are providing better support for our health workers, better care for the patients, better value for money, improving the service and putting more money into the system, and Queensland families are getting better health outcomes as a result.

You asked specifically about our record on cochlear implants. We made a commitment that all adults or adolescents waiting for a cochlear implant as at 1 June 2013 would be cleared from the waiting list by 30 June 2014. As at 1 June 2013 there were 119 patients on that list. We committed \$5.8 million to the initiative. An amount of \$2 million was also set aside to deliver cochlear implants to 22 children. As at 30 June 2014 all patients from this cohort who were suitable for an implant have been treated. This simply means that more deaf Queenslanders have been able to have their hearing restored because of the work of this government and our hardworking health professionals in a revitalised Queensland Health. You have referred to an instance of a gentleman. I understand he is a Vietnam vet?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr NEWMAN: In a speech I gave on Sunday I referred to an example that the health minister was talking about in which a lady received her implant and for the first time ever she heard her grandchildren and her children. As I recall, she had been deaf since the age of 16. What an exciting story! What a positive, positive thing for one individual and those other individuals to whom I have referred on that list. Every person has their own story. Every person has had their life transformed. I am quite confident in the way that you described and the way I have just indicated. This initiative to fast-track these implants demonstrates quite practically that we are getting results in fixing the health system and, again, that we have a strong plan for a bright future in Queensland.

Dr FLEGG: I refer to page 6 of the DPC SDS, client focused health services. How is the government’s focus on front-line health services and its record Health budget improving front-line ophthalmology services?

Mr NEWMAN: I spoke before about the work that we were doing or had done in the last 12 months on cochlear implants—slashing that waiting list so people could regain their hearing—and those were great outcomes. In a similar vein, just last week we announced that we would clear the long wait list of ophthalmology patients by 30 June 2015. This is about looking after 11,000 of our fellow Queenslanders who have been waiting longer than the clinically recommended time. That is very, very important because the situation is such that patients may well have suffered irreversible damage to their eyesight because they were not being seen in a timely fashion. I know the member for Moggill, as a medical professional, would understand only too well what I am alluding to, and that is of course glaucoma. If it is diagnosed in the early stages, the simple application of special eye drops can alleviate the pressure which builds up inside the eye, ensuring that the eye is not damaged. Getting to the detail of it, I understand from the clinicians that the mechanism is not totally

understood. However, it appears to be the case that the pressure—you can see the engineer in me coming out; it is all about fluid dynamics and hydraulics—builds up in the eye. What they think happens is that positive, higher than necessary pressure within the eye prevents the flow of blood into the eye which provides the oxygen and the nutrients to it that allows the cells to continue to live. As a result, the eye starts to deteriorate. With the simple application of these drops after early diagnosis, we can stop people going blind.

The other thing that will happen under this program is, of course, the treatment of cataracts. Cataract surgery is a very straightforward type of surgery these days. Once upon a time it was hazardous, difficult and expensive. Now it is a straightforward procedure that we really can, and will, provide for people in a timely fashion. So those two issues in particular—glaucoma and cataracts—are what we are endeavouring to deal with.

Overall, this initiative means that Queenslanders will have better sight because of the work the government is doing in partnership with the hardworking people in Queensland Health and the hospitals and the health centres throughout the state. Again, what did Anna Bligh say? In September 2011—and I ask the Leader of the Opposition and her colleague to ponder this. This is what Anna Bligh said in September 2011. She said that long waiting times to be seen in a hospital are now simply 'a fact of life'. Clearly, they would not try hard enough. Clearly, they would not work hard enough. Clearly, politics was more important than practical solutions and outcomes for Queenslanders. Under Labor, patients were turned away by the refusal to even add them to the waiting list. We are addressing the waiting list issues to ensure that Queenslanders get access to the health services they need rather than languishing, as they did under Labor. We are actively reducing emergency department waiting times, elective surgery waiting times, dental waiting times and we have stamped out ambulance bypass. In most cases these days, ambulance ramping does not exist or has been dramatically reduced. We are now focusing on the next phase of these health service outcomes, like the cochlear implants, the ophthalmology assistance and the big announcement as well from the last week, which was our immunisation policy and the services that come off the back of that. We are going to deliver for Queenslanders all these things—again, a strong plan for a bright future.

Dr FLEGG: I refer to page 6 of the DPC SDS, client focused human services. How is the government's focus on front-line health services and its record Health budget improving front-line elective surgery services?

Mr NEWMAN: This interlinks with some of the things I have been talking about. Again, I have to reiterate that we have a strong plan for a bright future in this state, and the improvement of front-line health services and ultimately the best performing public health service system in the nation is our goal. Make no mistake about it; that is what Queenslanders deserve. They pay their taxes and we are going to do everything possible to give them that. Mums and dads want their kids to be able to get into hospital to be treated, to be protected when they are sick or hurt. That is what they want to be able to do. We have a plan to make sure that Queenslanders who need elective surgery can get in to have their surgery as quickly as possible. We are committed to achieving the Commonwealth government's national elective surgery target, or NEST, by increasing the number of patients seen within clinically recommended times and reducing the number of long waits.

Let's have a look at performance data. Queensland NEST performance data for 2014 to May inclusive: 94.8 per cent against a NEST category 1 target of 100 per cent, 81.3 per cent against a NEST category 2 target of 94 per cent and 90.1 per cent against a NEST category 3 target of 97 per cent. The median waiting time for elective surgery was 28 days for the March 2014 quarter—category 1, 12 days; category 2, 63 days; and category 3, 159 days. Of course, the standard for category 1 is 30 days. So 12 days is that median waiting time. They are obviously the very urgent cases. The number of long wait elective surgery patients has decreased by 77 per cent since 1 June 2013. The percentage of category 1 urgent patients who receive their surgery within the clinically recommended 30 days has increased under the LNP, up from 86 per cent under Labor to 93 per cent under this LNP government.

The percentage of category 2 semi-urgent patients who received their surgery within the clinically recommended 90 days has increased under the LNP, up from 73 per cent under Labor to 78 per cent under the LNP. The total number of patients who have waited longer than clinically recommended times for their surgery has been dramatically reduced under the LNP government; down from 6,485 at the change of government to 2,842.

Are we resting on our laurels? No. Do we think it is good enough yet? No, we do not. We are going to continue to strive and fight every single day for Queenslanders to get a better performing health system. Remember again what Anna Bligh said in September 2011. She said that long waiting times to be seen in a hospital are now simply 'a fact of life'. Under Labor, patients were even refused access to get on the waiting list. There was a waiting list to get on the waiting list. We are addressing the waiting list issue to ensure that Queenslanders get access to health services they need rather than languishing as they did under Labor. We are providing better support for our health workers, better care for our patients, better value for money, improving service and putting more money into the system—over \$2 billion more, an 18.6 per cent increase in the health budget in the last two years—and Queensland families are getting a better quality health service as a result. It is part of our strong plan for a bright future for this state.

CHAIR: Thank you. The member for Inala has a number of questions.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much, Chair. I just have a couple of questions. Premier, you mentioned before about leading an open and accountable government. My first question is in relation to pursuing that to ensure that you are leading an open and accountable government. Will you adopt the LNP's resolution on the weekend to require that directors-general table their pecuniary interest register in the public domain, or are you giving it active consideration?

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, I think that question is out of order because it has nothing to do with the SDS.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is fine. My next question, Premier, again has to do with being an open and accountable government. I would very much like to know who handed you the member for Bundamba's personal file note that you actually tabled in the Queensland parliament.

CHAIR: Again I do not see how that is—

Mr NEWMAN: I do not see how that relates to the SDS. But I want to talk about accountability anyway, and I want to spend some time talking it because the Leader of the Opposition has in recent weeks seen fit to talk about accountability quite a bit.

Ms PALASZCZUK: And I will keep talking about it.

Mr NEWMAN: I will take that interjection. It would be great. I would love to talk about accountability with the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let's have a debate about it. I would love to have a debate about it.

Mr NEWMAN: I am happy to do that. The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that the only two cabinet ministers who have gone to jail in the last 20 years are from her political party. The Leader of the Opposition knows that the Shepherdson inquiry exposed great wrongdoing and malfeasance and illegality in the Australian Labor Party, and there are people—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Do you want to answer the question that's been put to you?

CHAIR: Continue, Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: And there are people within her party today who probably still have a case to answer.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Talk about electoral donations.

CHAIR: Will you please stop the injections, thank you.

Mr NEWMAN: The interjection was electoral donations, so let's see where the ministerial diaries are for the period up to the change of government in March 2012. Did the Leader of the Opposition meet with Mr Eddie Obeid? Who did meet with Mr Eddie Obeid? Who met with Australian Water Holdings? Where are the diaries? Where are the contacts with lobbyists registrars? Where have they gone?

Ms PALASZCZUK: We can get you a general answer to those questions right here and now if you want to. Australian Water Holdings, I am happy to go there.

Mr NEWMAN: Where is the Leader of the Opposition's diary for April, May and June of this year? Where is the Leader of the Opposition's diary?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy to go there.

CHAIR: The Premier is answering the question.

Mr NEWMAN: I refer to the statistics I provided earlier in relation to the RTI process. Under Labor, in the 2010-11 financial year the former Premier released less than 25 per cent of the documents found in response to RTI applications. In 2013-14, my office received 51 valid RTI applications and 95 per cent of the documents located were released. That is openness; that is transparency. Let the Leader of the Opposition table her diary not just for April—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Who gave you the member for Bundamba's personal files in the Public Service?

Mr NEWMAN:—May and June, but also for the period prior to the change of government. Where have those diaries gone? Why did the Australian Labor Party take a number of donations from Australian Water Holdings and what was promised to them? We could go on and on and on and on.

We have an Open Data Initiative where 1,200 data sets are now online. Most of these data sets contain information that was hidden away by Labor. The public were not allowed to see them; could not get them; they were inaccessible—and now it is there for free for Queenslanders.

We have introduced a bill to improve parliamentary scrutiny of government spending. We publish six-month action plans. We say, 'This is what we are going to do in the six months of the parliamentary term', and then we actually report against that. We have made it possible for the community to know what is going on with the Crime and Corruption Committee, because the default position now is that their hearings will be held in the open.

The lobbyists' contact with government is now publicly available. This is an open and accountable government. We have been delivering on that. Contrary to assertions otherwise, we continue to deliver and we have this strong plan for a brighter future.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. Does the member for Mulgrave have a question?

Mr PITT: Thank you, Chair. My question is to the Auditor-General. Auditor-General, I have spoken earlier today in answer to a question to the Premier with relation to your audit report No. 12 2013/14 related to 1 William Street and the sale of seven CBD office buildings for, I think if memory serves, \$237 million below book value. I just want to very quickly quote from that report. It states:

Operating lease commitments have increased by \$1.2 billion, primarily as a result of entering into lease agreements on government buildings sold to QIC Limited trusts. The state has also committed to operating lease payments of around \$1.0 billion on the 1 William Street Brisbane building, commencing on completion of the project.

In the report this comes under the heading of 'Risks to operating sustainability'. It is a pleasure to have you before the committee today, and I wonder whether you can expand in particular in relation to the 1 William Street precinct and those ongoing costs and what that means for the state's finances.

Mr Greaves: Thanks very much. The context of the 1 William Street article was predominantly around the observation that there was no business case which set out the cost and benefits, and therefore on the evidence that was in front of us we could not then make a determination on whether or not it represented value for money, but we were—

Mr PITT: Sorry to interrupt you. Can I just ask: are you confirming that there was no cost benefit analysis done for this particular project?

Mr Greaves: No evidence was provided to us that it was undertaken by the Public Service in accordance with the project assurance framework that was in place at the time. That does not necessarily mean that it is not value for money. We are simply saying here that a process was not followed that was an expected process of the administration, and that was the point that we drew out in that article in my report.

In terms then of the future risks sustainability, we won't speculate at this stage but we would want to understand whether or not the purported savings will in fact be realised in terms of the rental savings. So that is something that we will continue to track and monitor and report back to the parliament on each year.

CHAIR: Premier, you had some questions on notice that you would like to answer.

Mr NEWMAN: Yes, thank you, Mr Chairman. We had firstly the question from the member for Gladstone in relation to how much had been allocated for the Policy Development Fund under the Electoral Act. The answer to that is \$3 million has been allocated in the 2014-15 financial year.

The second question was in relation to the fund and about how many parties have applied for funding, et cetera. The answer here is that \$1.5 million was allocated in 2013-14, paid from January 2014 to coincide with recent amendments to the Electoral Act 1992. Section 241 of the Electoral Act 1992 stipulates that policy development payments are to be paid in two equal instalments on or

before 31 July and 31 January after the end of the financial year. The electoral regulation establishes an annual pool of \$3 million. It is to be divided between the eligible parties, resulting in two six-month payments totalling \$1.5 million.

The bill was assented on 26 May 2014, and the PDP payment was retrospective to 1 January 2014; that is, payable for the second, but not first, six-month period. In accordance with the regulation, \$1.5 million of the PDP is payable as follows: Australian Labor Party, \$0.466 million; Katter's Australian Party, \$0.195 million; LNP, \$0.839 million. This amount is due and payable by 27 July 2014. The eligible parties have been advised formally of the above amounts payable.

This financial year the total pool of \$3 million will be paid in two separate instalments of: ALP, \$0.469 million; Katter's Australian Party, \$0.196 million; and the LNP, \$0.835 million. The first instalment is due and payable by 31 July 2014. Eligible parties have been advised formally of the above amounts payable.

Any further questions about the timing, nature and status of the payments should be referred to the Electoral Commission, who controls the day-to-day administration.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. I think we have time for one last question. Member for Sunnybank.

Mr STEWART: Premier, I refer to page 7 of the Department of Premier and Cabinet SDS, cutting red tape and regulatory burden. Can the Premier please explain to the committee where the government is currently at in regards to its red tape reduction program and what this means for Queensland businesses?

Mr NEWMAN: Mr Chairman, a key element of the government's strong plan for a brighter future in Queensland is to cut waste and reduce red tape. It was one of the five pledges at the 2012 election, and we continue to look for ways to cut waste and red tape that built up through years of Labor Party neglect, leading to obstruction and stagnation of business, projects and jobs. The government has committed to cut burdensome red tape and regulation by 20 per cent by 2018. The aim is to reduce costs and directly benefit Queensland businesses and families. Businesses get lower costs and improve productivity; Queensland mums and dads get more jobs from businesses that save on red tape and time-consuming burdens.

Red tape cuts across all sectors of the economy, whether it is resources, agriculture, construction, tourism and other areas. The Office of Best Practice Regulation's first annual report showed a 3.5 per cent regulatory reduction on business and community in the year end to June 2013. The OBPR's report also highlighted significant economic benefits and savings to industry exceeding \$1 billion.

Mr Chairman, we are cutting red tape for the nonprofit sector so front-line service providers can focus better on the needs of our most vulnerable Queenslanders. Some key red tape reforms include the formation of the Resources Cabinet Committee to work at the highest level in reducing red tape for our resources industry. One result reduced project approval times for major projects by around 50 per cent. We removed the requirement for up to 27,000 farmers to renew water licences, giving them more time to run and grow their businesses. We reduced green tape which is expected to save business over \$6 million in annual fees and reduced the paperwork and fees for over 9,400 small to medium businesses. Importantly, we have cut red tape for Queensland schools. I talked about this a bit before. We introduced independent public schools which gave powers to principals working with their school communities to act locally and slash through red tape and get better outcomes for our kids.

Mr Chairman, we will continue to drive red tape reform at every opportunity to remove regulatory barriers to economic growth, promote better services and generally make life easier for Queenslanders. In all that we do, as the servants of Queenslanders we are putting our customers and the Queensland economy first, and it is part of our strong plan for a brighter future.

May I just tack on to the end of that a clarification of something I said way back at the beginning, in my opening address. Just to clarify, the interest cost from the current level of debt accumulated by the Australian Labor Party is \$450,000 per hour. I think I might have said something incorrect, but it is \$450,000 an hour.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. The time allotted for the consideration of the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Premier has now expired. On behalf of the committee I thank the Premier and the departmental officers. I make particular mention of the new Integrity Commissioner, Mr Richard Bingham. I think this is your first official duty with this committee. Welcome to the team. We thank you all for your cooperation today.

The committee has resolved that answers to any questions taken on notice—I think there is one of those now—and additional information must be provided to the committee secretariat by 4 pm on Wednesday, 16 July 2014.

The committee has concluded its examination of the matters relating to the Premier and related entities referred to it by parliament. The committee's second hearing, to be held by Thursday, 17 July, will examine the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Treasurer and Minister for Trade.

On behalf of the committee I would like to thank the officers of the Parliamentary Service for their assistance with today's hearing. I declare the hearing closed.

Committee adjourned at 5.00 pm